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THE
BELFAST POLITICS,
ENLARGED ;
BEING A COMPENDIUM
OF
THE POLITICAL
HISTORY OF IRELAND,
FOR
THE LAST FORTY YEARS.

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COMPILED BY JOHN LAWLESS, ESQ .  
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ADDRESS

TO THE

CITIZENS OF BELFAST.

WHEN I first determined to collect those political productions, by whose spirit and eloquence Belfast has been so peculiarly distinguished for the last forty years, I did imagine that it would have been sufficient to give to my readers a faithful and well arranged compilation, without any observation, or any reflection, on the practice or the principles of those who have endeavoured to make the past labors of the most enlightened and valued of our countrymen tributary to their favorite object of raising the monopoly of a few, on the ruins and the degradation of the many.

It is with great pain, indeed, I have witnessed the laborious struggle that has been lately made to perpetuate those jealousies, religious and political, that have already succeeded in extinguishing the name and honor of our country. It is with sorrow I peruse the overlaid pages of those authors, who think no toil too great, no industry too excessive, if they shall be

able to save from the corruption of the grave those melancholy memorials of ancient bigotry and ancient misfortune—notes piled on notes, drawn from the cobweb lumber of polemical controversy, or extracts from authors, who were paid to defame and calumniate the religion of a people, whom they afterwards plundered and oppressed. From Geraldus Cambrensis to Sir Richard Musgrave, every historian who has been most distinguished by his hostility to the peace and harmony of Irishmen, has been industriously consulted, and those opinions selected, that are best calculated to keep alive the devastating fire, which has almost burned up whatever remains of humanity in the Irish bosom—the sacred spirit of TOLERATION every where scoffed at and trampled upon—the priest, of every sect of Christianity, Protestant, Presbyterian, and Catholic, represented as contending for their respective supremacy, with the dagger in one hand and the Bible in the other—preaching Peace with the sword of the conqueror, or propagating the Gospel of Christ with the fire of intolerance.

Such is the picture, carefully and anxiously preserved by men whose talents and understanding should have disdained so unworthy an office; whose common sense, at least, should have told them, that the public mind of the present day, turns aside with loathing and disgust from such wretched recitals, and that it closes the volume that would revive the animosities of ancient days with indignation against those who would thus speculate on its credulity. It must be matter of surprise and regret to every good and benevolent mind, to see men of talents and acquirements sitting down, in the solitude of their study, to the work of *giving perpetuity* to the bigot and the usurper, surrounded perhaps as that study is by a crowd of evidence which could bear testimony to the follies and the crimes of civil and religious intolerance. It must be matter of surprize, that men of talents and information should be found, who will gravely insist upon the danger of

giving freedom to the human mind, at the moment they are describing the horrors of the Inquisition, the despotism of Popes and the bigotry of Catholics ; *thus* practising the illiberality they condemn, and refusing to their neighbour the indulgence they clamorously claim for themselves. Closing the volume of history, they affect to forget, that all denominations of Christians, whenever established by *temporal authority*, acted the tyrants in turn, tyrants over the mind as well as the body ;—that all denominations of religions had their *Popes*, and that the great discovery of modern times, the application of the *omnipotent* principle of *universal toleration* to all sects, is the efficient and certain antidote to the corrupt and destructive passions of the bigot and the fanatic. To those who consult the history of mankind, it will appear, that no form of religion prevented the assertion of human rights—the Catholic in Hungary, and the Catholic in Ireland, are equally zealous in the cause of political freedom, as the Protestant of Prussia, or the Protestant of England. Both are equally jealous of their rights as men, and equally anxious to circumscribe the limits of temporal authority, whenever the opportunity arises ; but it is also true, that the religion of the Catholic and the religion of the Protestant, whenever either is made an instrument of *state*, can be converted into a sharp and devastating sword against the liberties and the rights of human nature. The Popes of Rome abused their power, and trampled on the rights of humanity ; the Kings of England abused their power, and, aided by the Episcopal Bench, practised the bigotry and intolerance they deprecated. Europe has been the victim of both religions, wherever they were identified *with the powers that governed*. The Christianity of both was forgotten ; the forms of religion were practised, the better to conceal the evasion of her doctrines ; the name of Christ was in the mouths of all his followers, at the moment they were refusing that mercy which their master had commanded. Persecution went

on in the name of God; and the pulpit, which should be a throne of light, was profaned to the purposes of party triumphs over the liberties of mankind! How often has the minister of God been seen blowing the trumpet of eternal hostility to those who have been taught from their cradle to believe, that the doctrines they maintained were the best calculated to secure them salvation? How often has the preacher, Catholic, Protestant, and Presbyterian, in every country of Europe, endeavoured, either by the keenness of sarcasm, or the affectation of liberality, to represent their neighbouring sects as bigots or fanatics? Yet still the war of religion is going on; still the battle of words and syllables is waging, and still the anonymous controversialists are daily flattering themselves with triumphs which every good man deploras; which the Deist and the Atheist rejoice at, and which future generations will pass by with the same contempt that is now entertained for those learned and laborious Theologians who have gone before them.

There was a period in the history of our country, when a few able and honest men flattered themselves they could put an eternal extinguisher on the pernicious squabbling of the bigot; when the circumstances of Europe encouraged the Irishman to hold up his head and demand better treatment for his country than she had experienced for 600 years. The difficulties of England, who had, in her hours of prosperity, insulted and enslaved the nation to which she had pledged her fidelity, emboldened the people of Ireland to demand as a *right*, those privileges which would not be conceded as a *boon*. The clouds which so long obscured and mildewed the fairest flowers of our native land, seemed to pass across the channel, and hover over the fortunes of our sister country, while the Sun of Liberty arose over Ireland in all his pomp and splendor, animating the almost lifeless body of a nation which had so long been chained down by a jealous and des-

potic code. *The Volunteers assembled*—our Patriots, in arms and eloquence, rose up, like one man, and asserted, in a tone which commanded attention, the rights and privileges of Irishmen. To adopt the language of one of those eloquent appeals, to which the times, and the spirit of which we are now speaking, gave birth,—“Man no longer reposed on ruins, or rested his head on some fragments of the temple of Liberty—he no longer amused himself in pacing the measurement of the edifice, and nicely limiting its proportions—he reflected that his temple was *truly Catholic*—the ample earth its area, and the arch of Heaven its dome.”

Irishmen who had been pelting each other with the ponderous and unintelligible folios of religious controversy for centuries, were now found seated at the same board, interchanging sentiments of the sincerest affection and confidence. The religion of Christianity succeeded to the religion of sects, and the principles of benevolence and mutual regard were practised as well as professed by the followers of Christ. “Let our enmities (said the enlightened volunteers of Belfast in reply to the address of their Catholic countrymen) rest with the bones of our ancestors—differing in our religion as we differ in our faces, but resembling each other in the great features of humanity, let us unite to vindicate the rights of our common nature; let the decisive and unanimous voice of the entire body of the people, the mighty and irresistible whole, be heard; it will, it must be obeyed.” It was obeyed. Freedom in trade, freedom in constitution were conceded. The Catholic was no longer an Irish Helot. He stood by the side of his brother Protestant; co-operated in the same cause, and succeeded in striking off some of the links of that chain which had so long withered the arms of national industry. The jealousy of England watched our country’s progress to union and happiness and strength, with a malignant and wakeful eye. The minister who could have established, in the gratitude of Ireland,

a bank on which he might have ever drawn without the apprehension of disappointment, became alarmed at an union so rapid, so extraordinary, so productive of Irish happiness and Irish strength. He dreaded the transition of partial to complete independence, and preferred confiding in the duplicity of a corrupt policy to the generous and enlarged system of one common constitution and one common empire. He therefore so ordered, that an Irish Protestant Legislature should be rendered odious to the Catholic People. It is true the fury of penal laws, the violence of persecution, were no longer to be acted upon; but the Irish Legislature was to be corrupted into an impotent tyranny over the country, and when completely alienated from the hearts and affections of the people, the minister could securely monopolize the credit of giving to the Catholic the protection the Protestant refused. "A new artifice (said an able production of this period) is adopted, and that restless domination, which at first ruled as open war by the length of the sword, then as covert corruption by the strength of the poison, now assumes the style and title of Protestant ascendancy, calls down the name of religion from heaven to sow discord upon earth; to rule by anarchy; to keep up distrust and antipathy among parties, among persuasions, among families; nay, to make the passions of the individuals struggle like Cain and Abel, in the very home of the heart, and to convert every little paltry necessity that accident, indolence, or extravagance brings upon a man, into a pander for the purchase of his honesty, and the murder of his reputation. The minister succeeded. The Catholics were insultingly rejected by the Irish Legislature. The breach was made between the people and their natural protectors, on which the minister speculated; and he then ordered that Parliament, which had so often and so insultingly rejected the petition of the Catholics, to grant only as much as might

best suit the further views of this Machiavelian policy—*This was the great and broad foundation of the Union.*"

What measure too desperate, or too base, which cannot be carried when a people are divided? Yet it is painful to see with what foolish triumph some Irishmen hail their own insignificance; how thoughtlessly they endeavour to calumniate the names and the motives of those distinguished individuals, who, at the period of which we are speaking, held out to their country, tossed about on a troubled sea, the steady lights of their firm and cultivated understandings. "Too long (said those estimable men whom inferior minds would wish to reduce in the estimation of their country) have the Irish People been set in array of battle against each other—too long have the rancour and revenge of our ancestors been left as a legacy of blood to their posterity—too long has one limb of the social body been tied down, until it had nearly lost all feeling, life and energy. It is our wish, it is our hope, to give Ireland the full and free possession of both her arms, her Catholic arm as well as her Protestant arm, that she may the better embrace her friends, or grapple with her foes." Yet there are political writers, who deplore the hour which would witness the union of religions in Ireland; who would set sect against sect, with all the fury and bitterness of fanaticism; who would insist upon the impossibility of either Catholics or Protestants, or Presbyterians, ever acting in the spirit of Christianity, animated by its benevolent precepts, its charity, or its mercy.*

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* We lament the necessity of being obliged to call public attention to the following passage, which we read in the preface to a work lately published in Belfast, by Mr. Berwick, called, *a History of Belfast*. Why thus endeavour to divide those denominations of Christianity, which, whatever their speculative differences may be, are fighting a common cause against the common enemies of both—the Atheist and the Deist? Why inculcate opinions which go to establish the eternal slavery of men, because they differ from each other upon abstract points of theology? It is productions like those we now allude to, which makes Ireland so o-

To those who only apply to the records of history to glean the filth and corruption of its pages ; who make that filth and that corruption their daily sustenance ; who, like their predecessors in the work of national division, vainly struggle to keep alive the embers of religious and political bigotry—to such men I say, the volume I now give to the public can not be a source of pleasure or instruction. They have taken their line ; and that line they think leads on to public notice and to fortune. They recommend a renewal of religious war—a revival of ancient antipathies—a return of ancient discord. They imagine that this course leads directly to *personal consequence*. They see distinctly that their country has fallen, and that those, and those alone who would dance upon its tomb-

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dious to its inhabitants, and which compels those who can accomplish it, to abandon a country, where *conscience* is eternally persecuted. We would recommend Mr. Berwick to omit the entire of his Preface in the next edition of a Work which is in many respects very valuable to the reader.—In this Preface we read the following——

“ When we reflect on the inveterate hostility which has subsisted among Protestants and Roman Catholics ever since the reformation, and on the sense which the former has invariably entertained of the inevitable tendency of the principles of the latter to promote *arbitrary power* in the state, and *intolerance and persecution* in the church, it must surely excite surprise, that a coalition should ever have been formed between such conflicting parties, for the purpose of extending the bounds of *civil and religious liberty*.”

And again—“ That the *Irish Romanists* participated with their orthodox brethren abroad, in a detestation of French principles, it is impossible to deny. However, to the utter amazement of all, they entered warmly (in 1792) into the views of the United Irishmen, and stepped forward as ardent and disinterested champions of *civil and religious liberty* ! Such a monstrous coalition struck all reflecting men with astonishment, and the long established maxim of popery immediately occurred to their thoughts, that ‘ no methods, whether of deceit or violence, are to be left unattempted for the service of their church, which, in all their lowest fortunes, they never suffer to be removed out of sight—that all forms of complaisance and dissimulation, of civility and good-humor, even to heretics themselves, are to be put on, to inveigle them to their own ruin’ —*Hoadley’s Sermons*, XI. p. 220.) and they must have recollected that Queen Mary, before she commenced the work of blood, ‘ commanded all her loving subjects to *live together in quiet sort*, leaving aside those new found devilish terms of Papist and Heretic,’ and that the plea of *liberty of conscience and universal toleration* was the ladder by which James II. endeavoured to mount to the summit of his ambition, and overthrow the constitution which he had sworn to support.”

stone may flatter themselves with the hope of political consequence. When such men appear, it is full time to set afloat the antidote to the poison ; it is time to take down those pages from the shelves on which they have so long, and so ingloriously slumbered, and which contained those sacred principles and universal sentiments that breathe in every line, and which may yet contribute to regenerate a People, who have been the victims of public treason.

When I first determined on the present work, I did conceive, that the learned Editors of the Belfast Politics, Messrs. Joy and Bruce, had labored to withdraw from circulation whatever remained of that very excellent publication. Since, however, I announced my intention, a few numbers of this popular work have re-appeared, and are now selling by my much respected fellow-citizen, Mr. S. Archer, I wish every success to the sale of that work, and thank Messrs. Joy and Bruce for the sudden and unexpected change of their sentiments on the prudence and propriety of its circulation. I am very certain that those gentlemen, in the utmost strainings of their benevolence, or the warmest aspirations of their patriotism, cannot confer a greater benefit on the community, than by the cheap and rapid dissemination of the doctrines contained in the pages of the Belfast Politics. I shall preserve those pages, and re-publish them in a cheap and convenient form for our countrymen ; but I shall do much more ; I shall add those political documents which Messrs. Bruce and Joy did not publish, and which are perhaps the *most valued*, and *most valuable* portion of the politics of Belfast. Indeed, when we speak of Belfast Politics, we comprehend almost *every political document* in Ireland, which had deserved celebrity, from 1769 to 1796.

Ireland took her tone from Belfast, and perhaps will continue to imitate her example. Messrs. Bruce and Joy must be aware, that it is an idle effort, to attempt the suppression of

a work in a town like Belfast, which never could be charged with literary monopoly ; whose citizens are not to be influenced *by names*, but principles ; who are not to be convinced by the swagger of dogmatism, but the cool and dispassionate exercise of reason and common sense.

Before I proceed to give to my readers those celebrated political productions which so powerfully directed the mind of our country from 1769 to 1796, I have considered that it would not be a bad mode of estimating the labors of modern patriots, to take a retrospective view of the state of that country, whose liberties they had asserted, and whose feelings they had defended. I therefore have endeavoured to give a rapid but comprehensive history of my country from that æra, from which British freedom has so often been dated, and have brought it down to that year, when the labors of our Irish Patriots commence their great and benevolent work. Thus will I present to my readers a volume every way worthy of their protection ; and thus will I be the instrument of recalling to the memory of Ireland those memorials of their genius, their learning and their patriotism, which should never be forgotten.

JOHN LAWLESS.

Belfast, 9, King-street.

June 30, 1817.

COMPENDIUM OF IRISH HISTORY;

FROM THE REVOLUTION OF 1688 TO 1779.

FROM the period of the English establishment, first effected, afterwards established, and finally secured by domestic treachery and division, there appears to have been no intention on the part of the invaders, to give the people the benefit of free and wholesome laws; and so far from wishing to coalesce and unite with the native inhabitants, the ill-fated policy of the invaders appears to have been to foment and perpetuate dissention, animosity, and hatred between the two nations; and it would appear, as Sir John Davis testifies, “that such as had the government of Ireland, under the Crown of England, did intend to make a perpetual separation and enmity between the English and Irish.”

Long did this ill-fated country groan under oppression and injustice—her rights trampled upon and disregarded—her complaints unattended to—and her sufferings unredressed; laboring under every corruption in her domestic government, deprived of all internal police, plundered by rapacious foreigners, and abandoned in despair by her children.

The King's deputies, and the deputies of these deputies, that held the reigning government, were strangers, and soldiers; united by no ties of sympathy with the inhabitants, their duty was conquest, and their reward was plunder.—Hence unavailing resistance, and more severe coercion; the riotous discontent of the half-subdued, drawing on themselves the suspicious severity of the half-established; and the subjugation of the former, effecting, by degrees, the ultimate degradation of both. It would be disgusting and revolting to the mind, to wade through the sanguinary details of a continual warfare and intermittent massacre, every where the field of slaughter—no where the field of triumph. We will pass over the alternate ravages of Charles and Cromwell to the conclusion of the contest between James and William, when the warfare of the nations had ceased, and that of the government began; and when the Parliament of England first assumed over Ireland an authority as tyrannical as it was unjust.

From this period the ravages of internal warfare had ceased, and the historian of those times has little else to record than parliamentary transactions; but unhappily, these are sometimes of such a nature, as, more permanently than war, to sink the nation in poverty and barbarism.

The Revolution of 1688, opens to our view a new scene of Irish politics; and that æra, so auspicious for the liberties of England, produced in Ireland a more aggravated scene of oppression. Then, more than ever, was it treated as a conquered nation; its independence violated—its national consequence and dignity debased—and a systematic, rigid, and uniform policy seems to have been acted upon, not only to trample upon the rights of individuals, but even to extinguish the very idea of an independent legislature.

In no sense whatever did the revolution of 1688 open to Ireland any of those constitutional blessings which were so

gloriously asserted by England ; and in no sense could that revolution be termed any thing else to the Irish than a mere conquest ; a conquest of the hardest nature ; for it was not followed up by a participation of civil rights and liberties, but acted upon as a new ground for burdening them with additional grievances.

The supporters of the Whig interest in Ireland differed from those who forwarded the revolution in England, in principle, in action, and in views. The Irish Whigs of that day were the relics of the Cromwelian party, avowing no other principle but that of retaining the monopoly and the power of the few over the bulk of the nation ; acting upon them with arbitrary severity, in order to rivet the whole power of the country in disgraceful and everlasting subjection.

Hence, however glorious the exertions of England in the cause of Freedom were, yet the unbiassed mind will arraign their motives, when it contemplates the English Parliament opposing that very liberty in Ireland, which they so resolutely and so successfully supported in England.

The articles of Limerick had scarcely received the great seal of England, when they were attempted to be violated, in defiance of the faith of nations, and in disregard to all those principles by which society should be governed.

Though Ireland, as an independent kingdom, claimed under William, the same right it had enjoyed under his predecessors, yet did the Parliament of England usurp the right of legislating for Ireland, in as free and uncontrolled a manner, as if Ireland had no Parliament of her own. Thus, in the year 1691, before William had convened an Irish Parliament, the English Parliament passed an act, to alter the laws of Ireland, regarding the most essential fundamental rights of the subject, by excluding the Roman Catholics, who composed the decided majority of Ireland, from a seat in either House of Parliament. And when a pure Protestant Parlia-

ment was convened, in the year 1692, so little satisfied with it was the Parliament of England, that they continued their legislative encroachments on Ireland, by enacting whatever laws they thought proper, for regulating and settling the legal, civil, military, and ecclesiastical departments of Ireland, for checking their commerce, and disposing of their property.

Lord Sidney being created Lord Lieutenant, in 1692, immediately on his arrival in Ireland, issued writs, and convened a new Parliament; the primary object of which was to raise supplies, to discharge the debt contracted during the war. The Commons consented to a grant, not exceeding £70,000 pleading the inability of the people, from the calamities of the late war, to increase the grant. There had been no Parliament in Ireland for the last twenty-six years; and although the Parliament of England had undertaken to legislate for Ireland, in the most important matters of State, it had not yet proceeded to the extent of raising money directly upon the people of Ireland. The Parliament which was now convened, after so long an interval, could not be insensible of the encroachment made on their independence; they felt their consequence, and manifested, by their conduct, their just resentment of the usurpations of the English Legislature. They considered it to be their indispensable right to determine, in the first instance, the sum and manner of raising every supply granted to the Crown;—and when, in violation of this privilege, two money bills, which had not originated with them, were transmitted from England, and laid before them, they, with becoming dignity, resented this encroachment on their privileges, by rejecting one of them, and declaring, “that, from the extreme urgency of the case, they alone consented to pass the other.” They, at the same time, entered some very pointed and spirited resolutions on their journals, in support of their rights.

His Excellency was highly enraged at these resolutions;

and, in his speech, upon proroguing the Parliament, he severely reprimanded them for having, in opposition to the design of their meeting, undutifully and ungratefully invaded their Majesties' prerogative. And when the Commons requested permission to send Commissioners to England, in order to lay a full and impartial statement of their conduct before their Majesties, he contemptuously and insultingly told them, "*That they might go to England to beg their Majesties' pardon, for their seditious and riotous assemblies.*"

This unexpected and ungracious prorogation of the Parliament, created general discontent. Bills of importance, which had been prepared, remained imperfect;—and the several grievances complained of, remained unredressed.

At a subsequent meeting of Parliament, a Bill, upon the principle of the English Bill of Rights, was introduced into the House of Lords. It proposed to enact, that the pretended power of dispensing with laws, or of executing laws, by regal authority, as assumed and exercised in the late reign, was illegal.—

That the election of Members of Parliament ought to be free.—That the freedom of speech in Parliament can only be impeached or questioned in Parliament.—That excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel or unnatural punishments inflicted.—

That Jurors ought to be duly impanneled and returned; and that jurors, in trials for high treason, should be freeholders.

This bill was, with some addition, agreed to by the Commons, and transmitted; but to the very great disgrace of Government, *not returned*.

As the Parliament continued to act on principles offensive to the Court, it was prorogued a second time, and then dissolved.

Lord Sydney having become an object of popular odium, was now recalled, and the Government vested in three Jus-

tices, Lord Capel, Sir Cecil Wythe, and Mr. Duncombe. Difference of principle, however, soon disunited the measures of their Government. Influenced by a strong desire of recommending himself to the favorable opinion of the English settlers, Lord Capel attached himself to their interest, which he labored to promote, even at the expense of equity. Sir Cecil and Mr. Duncombe interested themselves in behalf of the Irish. They protected them from oppression. Those who, from selfish views, attempted to infringe the articles of Limerick, they restrained by their authority.

Neither a desire of Court influence, nor a regard to the applause of the powerful, were the principles of their conduct; they only wished to be distinguished by a wise and just administration. Seldom does Government approve and encourage in its servants such integrity of heart. The conduct of Lord Cecil was adapted to the prejudices of the powerful;—his interest prevailed, to the removal of his two upright colleagues, and he was created sole Governor, under the title of Lord Deputy.

In a Parliament, convened by this Governor, the necessary supplies were granted;—the proceedings in King James's Parliament were reversed; though in violation of their legislative privileges, a law to the same purpose had been passed in England. The Act of Settlement was explained and confirmed;—the Articles of Limerick were also confirmed, but so modified, as to lessen the security to the persons concerned; and a few penal statutes were added, in addition to those which had been already enacted against Catholics.

It was, however, every day becoming more apparent, that civil liberty could not make the progress it did in England, and that Ireland should continue more than insensible to its blessings; and the Irish people were hourly becoming more reluctant to surrender and renounce those rights, which the English had so gloriously asserted for themselves.

Among the many who felt strongly the injury done to our civil rights, by the Parliament of England, Mr. Molyneaux, one of the representatives for the city of Dublin, particularly distinguished himself by his patriotism and ability.

In his endeavours to promote the improvement of our manufactures, he found himself continually opposed by the spirit of British monopoly; and perceiving, that neither our manufactures, our commerce, nor any exertion on which national prosperity depends, could succeed, so long as our natural and constitutional rights were opposed by the unjust interference of the British Legislature;—determined to vindicate the cause of his country, and to diffuse throughout the nation a just sense of its constitutional rights, he, in 1698, published a book, styled, “*The Case of Ireland being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated;*” for the purpose of proving, from historical facts, *That the kingdom of Ireland was as independent of the kingdom of England, as the latter was of the former.*—This book was written in a strain of independent discussion and spirited assertion, to which Ireland had long been a stranger. It taught the people of Ireland to consider, more justly and more attentively, the nature of their connexion with England; and obtained for its author that applause, his patriotism and talents so well merited.

Very different were the opinions entertained by the English House of Commons;—they appointed a committee to examine the book, and on the report of this committee, the Commons unanimously resolved, “That the book published by Mr. Molyneaux, was of dangerous tendency to the Crown and People of England, by denying the authority of the King and Parliament of England to bind the kingdom and people of Ireland; and the subordination and dependence Ireland had, and ought to have upon England.” They also, in a body, presented an Address to his Majesty, enlarging, in terms of great indignation, on the book, and its pernicious

assertions; and beseeching him to take care that the laws *which directed and restrained the Parliament of Ireland*, should not be evaded. In answer to which, they received a promise from his Majesty, of his acting according to their wish.

The book was also burned by the hands of the common hangman, by order of Government.

The English Parliament continued to exercise over Ireland an authority as unjustifiable as it was oppressive; and our manufactures were almost in every instance sacrificed to the illiberal and selfish views of the English trader. In England, the woollen manufacture had become a staple commodity; with us likewise it was a profitable branch of commerce. Before the time of Charles I. we indraped our wool, and exported the overplus to foreign markets. Of this privilege, the English, jealous of a competition, endeavoured to deprive us by several Acts of Parliament, more especially by one, enacted in the reign of Charles II. which was deeply marked by the most unjust severity. Previous to the publication of Molyneaux, the Irish Parliament had been required by the King, to pass laws for the encouragement of the hempen and linen manufactures in this country, *and the discouragement of the woollen*, in consequence of representations made by English traders, who apprehended a competition of the Irish in the latter. The preference thus promised to the hempen and linen manufactures, so as exclusively to supply the English trade in fabrics of this kind, and *to amount to a compensation for the loss of the woollen*, was not given for six years after; and in the mean time, the growing and manufacturing of hemp and flax was so favored by Government in Scotland and England, that these countries became rivals in this branch of industry to Ireland, where the trade of hemp entirely failed.—Thus was Ireland unjustly compelled to lay restrictions on a profitable branch of industry; cheated out of the promised compensation; and when even the

most fostering indulgence to the Irish, for profiting by these materials, could never have compensated for the loss of their woollen manufacture.

Not contented with these restrictions, the English Parliament, in the year 1699, appointed a committee, to inquire into the state of the woollen manufactures in Ireland, who reported, that as both wool and labor were cheaper in Ireland, than with them, we were enabled to undersell them in foreign markets; that this branch of business was increasing with us; *and that they neither could nor would suffer the woollen manufactures of this country, to rise into competition with theirs.* In consequence, they passed a law, prohibiting the exportation from Ireland, of all cloths made of wool, or containing any mixture of it.—The prohibitory laws of this class, enacted in England, were accompanied with enforcements, as inconsistent with the political distinctness of Ireland, as with the free principles of the British constitution. By one act, the accused were liable to the penalties of confiscation and imprisonment; by another, to transportation.—By the former of these statutes, no acquittal, in Ireland, of any offence against it would be allowed, in bar or delay of any indictment or prosecution, within the kingdom of England.

Thus, a person, for using his liberty, as a freeman, in exporting any of these prohibited articles, might be tried in this country, and acquitted, under all the forms of law in Ireland, and yet might be still dragged to England, to be tried for the same offence, by a foreign jury, in a strange land, where he could not have his witnesses; far from his friends, and perhaps without money or resources.

The immediate effects of these prohibitory laws, were poverty and distress to Ireland; insurmountable by the fertility of her soil, and the ingenuity of her inhabitants. Deprived of the means of subsistence at home, thousands of Irish manufacturers emigrated to France, and other countries, and

carried their industry and knowledge from the place of their nativity, which crushed their exertions, and waged an unnatural war against their prosperity, to improve and augment the manufactures of foreign lands.—Thus, the French were enabled not only to supply their own demands, but even to undersell the English, in the markets of other nations.—Thus, England suffered, in a tenfold proportion, for every injury she inflicted upon Ireland. By depriving that country of the resources of her industry, she deprived herself of the fruits, which would have ultimately reverted to her; and she banished a hardy, an intelligent, and industrious population, to swell the resources, and improve the manufactures of a powerful and rival nation.

The destruction of the woollen manufacture, was not the only evil Ireland sustained, from the unjust and illiberal prohibition of the English Legislature. Among a variety of other restrictions, embargoes were frequently laid on the exportation of provisions, ruinous to agriculture, and other species of industry; and the spirit of monopoly had so completely pervaded England, that if the Parliament had been influenced, to the full extent, by the applications which were made to them, Ireland must have been in a great degree depopulated. The spirit, respecting Ireland, which prevailed in England, appears, if possible, more strongly, from the following circumstance, than even from the particulars already adduced.

Two petitions were presented in 1698, by the people of Folkstone in Kent, and Aldborough in Suffolk, stating a grievance which they sustained from Ireland, “by the Irish catching herrings, at Waterford and Wexford, and sending them to the Straights, thereby forestalling and ruining Petitioners’ markets.”

The reign of Queen Anne, who succeeded on the death of William, in 1701, we find distinguished only by the com-

plaints of national poverty, the violence of party spirit, and a rigorous augmentation of penal statutes against Catholics. The Parliament convened, 1703, by the Duke of Ormond, after voting the necessary supplies, presented a representation to the Lord Lieutenant, to be delivered to Her Majesty ; in which they complain, " that the constitution of the kingdom had been injured, and the lives, liberties, and estates of the people had been called in question, in a manner unknown to their ancestors ; that the current cash of the kingdom was not equal to the extraordinary expences incurred. They then proceed to complain of the invasion of their constitutional rights by a foreign judicature ; the corrupt and oppressive conduct of the trustees of the forfeited estates ; and of the misery arising from the restrictions of commerce. That her subjects have felt deeply their loss of trade ; that they could not earn their livelihood, or support their own manufactures ; that their foreign commerce labored under such restrictions, as to have become, in a great measure, unprofitable ; and that the infrequent meeting of parliament, was a principal cause of the national misfortunes.

To this representation Her Majesty returned the following cold reply : " The first part of it seems to relate to matters passed in Parliament ; and the other part only consisting of things in general, Her Majesty can give no particular answer to at present, but will take it into her consideration." The same Parliament, after having voted the necessary supplies, proceeded, with laudable spirit, to rectify several public abuses, particularly, to their distinguished honor, they abolished useless pensions, to the amount of £16,000 a year.

This just punishment of the worthless, and attention to the interests of their country, is in the highest degree worthy of praise, but has unfortunately seldom been imitated. How many scandalous prostitutes to the government, who rise as their country descends, and whose merit is their profligacy,

fatten and subsist on the labors of the worthy and industrious mechanic !

An act was also passed, to settle the succession in the house of Hanover. In a Bill, to prevent the farther growth of Popery, Roman Catholics were disqualified from voting at elections, and from serving as Members of Parliament ; several other severities were enacted against them.

During the whole reign of Queen Anne, the penal laws were executed with unabating severity against the Roman Catholics—though no act of disloyalty, no design of disturbing the peace, could, with any reasonable foundation, be charged on the body of that people. William, though educated in the principles of the Calvinists, a sect very adverse to the Church of Rome, and though the only momentous opposition to the establishment of his government, in the British Islands, had arisen from the Irish Catholics, was too liberal, had his Parliament been equally enlightened, to have treated with intolerance his Catholic subjects, but would ultimately have sunk the asperities of sectarian prejudices in the ample field of Christian benevolence and toleration.

As the kindness, the wisdom, the justice, and the humanity of King William, had attached them to government ; so did the opposite conduct which was pursued, when this enlightened Prince was scarcely laid in his grave, alienate their affections from government, and their country ; they ceased to cultivate their farms, and converted them to grazing. Industry drooped, and multitudes of the inhabitants emigrated from every quarter, and sought elsewhere for the means of subsistence. It is painful to the feelings of every liberal mind to enumerate the many acts of oppression, passed in this reign ; which reduced the Roman Catholics to the lowest state of depression—which every sentiment of benevolence loudly condemns, and which no argument of policy, or of reason, can justify ; while those very laws, which seemed intended

to eradicate Popery from the land, tended only to fix it deeper, by strengthening and confirming the people in their opinions ; and their immediate effects were, hatred to the ruling party, and debasement of the intellect.

Humanity must shudder, to read the disgusting detail of oppressive laws, enacted at this period against this unhappy people ; and it would now be unnecessary to particularize the articles of the penal code, by which their religion was restricted, by a variety of new and aggravating oppressions ; by which the public faith, solemnly plighted to them, by the articles of Limerick, was violated, and by which, for the greater part of a century, they were reduced to a political blank, and by which, if the private generosity of Protestants had not frustrated their execution, they would have been degraded still more, to a condition hardly conceivable.

The very conduct of Catholics themselves, is a proof of the injustice and cruelty of these restrictions. The resistance of so much provocation to rebellion, as those laws furnished, is a marked test of the steady loyalty and peaceable demeanour of the Irish Catholics, from the revolution to the accession of his present Majesty, under whom they had the happiness of being considered as no longer enemies.

In the year 1719, the injuries of this country were aggravated, in a degree quite intolerable to the feelings of freemen ; and the transactions of that memorable period have affixed a stain on the justice and character of the English Legislature. A cause relative to an estate between Esther Sherlock and Maurice Annesley, was tried before the Court of Exchequer in Ireland. The latter obtained a decree, which, upon appeal, was reversed by the Lords. From this sentence Annesley appealed to the *English* Peers, who confirmed the judgment given in his favor by the Court of Exchequer, and issued an order to put him in possession of the disputed estate. Against this illegal determination, Sherlock petitioned the *Irish* House

of Lords. In this affair, involving so deeply the dignity of the Peers, and the privileges of the nation, the House of Lords proceeded with becoming prudence and dignity. Having first sanctioned themselves by the opinion of the judges, they resolved, that they would support their honor, jurisdiction, and privileges, by giving the Petitioner, Esther Sherlock, effectual relief, pursuant to a former order.

A petition was some time after presented to the House, by Alexander Burrows, Sheriff of Kildare, setting forth, "That his predecessor in office had put Sherlock in possession of the premises: that upon his entering into office, an injunction, agreeable to the order of the English Peers, issued from the Exchequer, requiring him to restore Maurice Annesly to the possession of the above lands; and that not daring to act in contradiction to the order of the House, he was fined; in consequence of this, being afraid he should be taken into custody, he durst not come to pass his accounts; and for this was fined £12,000." By the resolutions of the Lords, his conduct was approved, his fines annulled, and the Barons of the Exchequer were ordered to be taken into custody; and in vindication of these measures, and of the rights of the nation, they drew up a memorial, to be presented to His Majesty. In this excellent paper, they represented, that the kings and principal men of Ireland, having voluntarily submitted to Henry II. as their liege lord, obtained, at their request, from him, the benefit of English law, with many other privileges, particularly that of having a distinct parliament; and that, in consequence of this concession, the English had been encouraged to come over and settle in Ireland, where they were to enjoy the same privileges as in England.—That though the imperial Crown of this realm was annexed to that of Great Britain, yet, being a distinct dominion, none could determine with respect to the affairs of it, but such as were authorized, by its known laws and customs, or the express consent

of the King—that it was an innovation of his Majesty's prerogative, and a grievance to his Irish subjects, for any court of judicature to declare, that, in appealing to his Majesty's Parliament here, they did not bring their cause before a competent judicature. They then state the pernicious consequences of this usurped jurisdiction of the British Peers with spirit and perspicuity; and in conclusion, they inform his Majesty, that to prevent Esther Sherlock from making further application to the Irish Parliament, his deputy receiver had paid her the sum of above eighteen hundred pounds, the re-payment which money was expected from Government:—

That these proceedings of the English Lords had greatly embarrassed his Parliament of Ireland; disgusted the generality of his loyal subjects; and must of necessity expose all sheriffs and officers of justice to the greatest hardships, by this interference of different jurisdictions; they therefore hope, his Majesty will justify the steps they have taken, for supporting his prerogative, and the just rights and liberties of themselves and their fellow-subjects.

The representation and proceedings of the House of Lords in Ireland, concerning appeals, being transmitted to his Majesty, pursuant to an address for that purpose, were laid before the British House of Lords; who, instead of departing from the line of conduct they had adopted with respect to this country, the injustice of which was here placed in a clear and striking light, they resolved that the Barons of the Irish Exchequer had acted according to law, and with fidelity to the Crown of England; and they also supplicated his Majesty to confer on them some mark of his Royal favor, to compensate for the unjust censure and imprisonment they sustained.

Having thus far interposed in favor of these apostates from virtue and the cause of their country, the English Peers enacted a Bill, "*for the better securing the dependency of Ireland on the Crown of Great Britain,*" which also passed the Com-

mons, by a large majority, and was confirmed into a law, by the Royal assent.

Every Irishman should be acquainted with all the parts of this chain, passed to annihilate the privileges of our constitution. It was as follows:—"Whereas attempts have been lately made to shake off the subjection of Ireland upon the Imperial Crown of this realm; which will be of dangerous consequences to Great Britain and Ireland: And whereas the Lords of Ireland, in order thereto, have of late, against law, assumed to themselves a power and jurisdiction to examine, correct, and amend, the judgment and decrees of the Courts of Justice, in the kingdom of Ireland; therefore for the better securing of the dependency of Ireland upon the Crown of Great Britain, may it please your Majesty, that it may be enacted, and it is hereby declared and enacted, by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in the present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that the said kingdom of Ireland hath been, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto and dependent upon the Imperial Crown of Great Britain, as being inseparably annexed and united thereunto; and that the King's Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, the Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled, hath had of right, and ought to have full power and authority to make laws, and statutes, of sufficient force and validity, to bind the people and the kingdom of Ireland.

"And be it farther enacted, and declared, by the authority aforesaid, that the House of Lords of Ireland have not, nor of right ought to have, any jurisdiction, to judge, affirm, or reverse any judgment, sentence, or decree, given or made in any court within the same kingdom; and that all proceedings before the said House of Lords, upon any such judgement,

sentence, or decree, are, and are hereby declared to be utterly null and void, to all intents and purposes whatever."

Thus did the British Parliament, by this extraordinary statute, attempt to cast a veil over the iniquity of its former usurpations, to sanctify injustice, and to rob of their constitutional privileges, under the claim of a pretended right, three millions of freemen !

Notwithstanding the degraded state of subjection to which the Irish Parliament were reduced, such a spirit of opposition was raised among the people, in 1724, against a measure favored by the ruling party, that the British Cabinet thought it prudent to relinquish the business. Until then, from the encroaching Act of the British Parliament, few matters worth notice occurred. Precluded from the benefits of industry, by restricting laws, the people were so miserably poor, that the famous Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, a real lover of his country, declared, that he 'rejoiced at a mortality as a blessing to individuals and the public.' The same system of administration which had been adopted in the reign of William, continued through this period, and long after it. The Catholics were reduced to a political non-existence by the Irish Parliament, and the Irish Nation to a very low state of permanent weakness by the Parliament of Britain. The Viceroy, nominally vested with the executive government, came commonly for a short time, once in two years, leaving the real power to Lords Justices, who were principally occupied in consolidating an aristocratic influence for effectuating the plans of the British Cabinet. As in the councils by which Ireland was governed, its prosperity was manifestly no object, a number of men, real friends to their country's welfare, formed a party, called the *patriots*, to oppose the ministry. The soul of this party was Swift, whose writings excited in many of his countrymen a sense of their situation and true interests;

the first success of which, was the defeating of a job favored by the ministry.

To remedy the inconvenience arising from the scarcity of copper money in Ireland, *instead of a coinage from the royal mint, which had been repeatedly solicited*, a royal patent was granted to William Wood, an Englishman, for the coinage of halfpence and farthings, to the value of £108,000 for circulation in this kingdom. Such an indignity would probably have been submitted to, had he executed his trust with fidelity; but it seemed the intention of this man to consult merely his own emolument. He made his halfpence of such base metal, and so small, that a shilling of them was scarcely worth a penny. Of these, large quantities were sent over;—brass-money multiplied beyond all proportion; it was not only used in change, but accounts in general were likely to be paid in it, Wood might pour clandestinely into the kingdom a greater quantity than his patent authorized; foreigners might counterfeit the stamp, and swell the inundation of base metal; and when this medium should inevitably sink in exchange to its real value, the entire loss must fall upon the people of Ireland.

The spirit of the nation was at length roused at the iniquity of the job; and men of all ranks labored with united efforts to remedy an evil which already began to be sensibly felt.

Addresses to His Majesty against the patent were voted by the Irish Parliament; he was likewise addressed, on the same subject, by most of the city corporations. The Grand Jury of the County of Dublin presented, as enemies to Government, all those who should attempt to put this base coin into circulation. At Quarter Sessions the country gentlemen declared against it, almost unanimously; nor was it surprising, that an attempt to serve an individual, a foreigner, a man destitute of principle, to the ruin of thousands and the injury of the community, should excite general indignation.

Wood, instead of relinquishing a scheme, the baseness of which appeared in a glaring point of view, used every means to support it. By the influence of his friends, the English Privy Council published a report in approbation of the coin, and severe condemnation of the Irish Parliament's address.—After the minds of the people had been agitated a year by this disagreeable affair, the King, by the advice of the Irish Privy Council, revoked the patent, and thus allayed the general discontent.

Of those who opposed the iniquitous imposition of Wood's base money, Dean Swift was particularly distinguished; his *Drapier's Letters*, in which, with so much knowledge of the subject, with so much force and perspicuity, he pointed out the nature and consequences of this pernicious design, were of singular use; and his country still gratefully remembers this noble effort of his patriotism. He was, however, in danger of suffering deeply in the cause; for in these days of servitude, Irishmen had not even the privilege to complain. For the author of the *Drapier's Letters*, Government offered a reward of £300; however, not an individual could be found so base as to prostitute his conscience, and to dishonor his country, for the sake of this inglorious bribe. He remained undiscovered; the printer was then prosecuted; here likewise the tyranny of Government was disappointed of its aim—he was acquitted by the unanimous opinion of the jury.

The statutes and parliamentary acts, which took place a short time previous to those transactions, show the principle on which the Irish Government conducted themselves towards the people, in return for their unshaken loyalty to the House of Brunswick. In 1719 the Parliament passed an act for exempting the *Protestant* dissenters from certain penalties, to which they were (in common with the Catholics) subject, "in order," as the preamble says, "to unite his Majesty's *Protestant* subjects in interest and affection." Thus, were the Ca-

tholics unjustly excluded from this bond of mutual affection and interest. The Duke of Bolton, then Lord Lieutenant, when closing the session, recommended "*an union in interest and affection among all his Majesty's subjects.*" Unfortunately for the Catholics, the words of the statute were operative and lasting; those of the Lord Lieutenant, insidious, false, and transient.

The same Lord Lieutenant, in opening the session, in 1723, recommended Parliament, though no shadow of disloyalty could be affixed to the Catholics, "to strengthen the Protestant religion, by providing laws, and enforcing those in existence against Popish priests being in the kingdom." Removed as we now fortunately are out of that medium of bigotry, and fanaticism, which distorted the views of those who moved in it, it appears difficult to believe that the Commons, in 1723, amongst other cruel and oppressive acts, could, in a bill to prevent the further growth of Popery, unanimously adopt a clause, for castrating every Catholic clergyman that should be found in the realm!—This bill was presented to the Lord Lieutenant, on the 15th of November, 1723, and the Commons most earnestly requested his Grace to *recommend the same in the most effectual manner to his Majesty.* It was transmitted to England, and, for the honor of humanity, there suppressed with becoming indignation.* The Lord Lieutenant, on proroguing the Parliament, consoled them for the loss of their favorite bill; recommended a more vigorous execution of the penal laws against the Catholics; and promised them that he would contribute his part towards the prevention of the growing evil—Popery.

Lord Cartaret, who convened the Parliament in 1725, retained the Viceroyalty till 1731, but the chief manager of the

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 * Some Historians attribute the failure of the Bill to the humane interference of Cardinal Fleury with Mr. Walpole.

Irish Government, from 1724, was Boulter, the Primate of Ireland, whose primary object it appears, from the publication of his letters, was to maintain the ascendancy of an *English interest*, with little or no regard to the welfare of the country governed.—A line of distinction was drawn betwixt the English and the Irish interest, and all the arts of political intrigue were made use of to support the former, in opposition to the latter.—The most assiduous care was taken to fill all the great offices of state with Englishmen ; lest, if they were occupied by those of this country, opposition to the measures of Ministry should be made in favor of our privileges.

The high dignity, and large emoluments, which Boulter enjoyed in Ireland, might have interested him in its honor and prosperity. Instead of this, influenced by the prejudices he brought over with him from England, and by the principles of a complete courtier, he entered into and supported, with warmth, the views of government most prejudicial to it ; yet in private life, he was most amiably distinguished by his benevolence, generosity, and many acts of charity and compassion ; while, as a Minister, he paid little regard to the rights of the nation.

In the Administration of the Duke of Dorset, who succeeded Lord Carteret in 1731, the strength of the *patriots* appears to have been increasing, as a question of considerable importance was determined in favor of the people.

When, in the year 1715, apprehensions were entertained of a design upon the kingdom having been formed by the friends of the Pretender, the House of Commons passed a vote of credit to government to a considerable amount. This laid the foundation of our national debt, which in a few years increased to upwards of 200,000*l.* ; for the payment of the principal, as well as the interest of this debt, supplies were voted, session from session, by the Commons.

During the late Administration, the friends of Government moved in the House, that this fund should be granted to His Majesty, his heirs, and successors, for ever, redeemable by Parliament.

The Patriots insisted, and carried their point, that it was unconstitutional, and inconsistent with the public safety, to grant it for a longer term than from session to session.

An attempt was now made to vest it in the Crown for twenty-one years. When the affair came to be agitated, the strength of the Ministerialists and Country party was exactly equal; but immediately previous to the vote, Colonel Tottenham, who had ridden post on the occasion, arrived barely in time to determine, by his vote, the question against Government. His zeal on this occasion for the public good was long remembered with gratitude; and from the then novelty of coming to Parliament in boots, which he was compelled to do by the urgency of the question, "Tottenham in boots," became a favorite toast.

Several years subsequent to the administration of the Duke of Dorset, afford nothing worthy of notice in the history of this country. In 1754, Lord Chesterfield was, contrary to the real inclination of the Monarch, whose favorite errors in politics he had opposed, appointed Lord Lieutenant at a dangerous juncture, when in the midst of an unsuccessful war against France and Spain, an alarming rebellion had been raised in Scotland, in favor of Charles Edward Stuart, son of the Pretender. The administration of this highly polished, liberal, and enlightened Nobleman, was a kind of phenomenon in Irish History.

Vested with ample powers, he acted from his own judgment, uninfluenced by the councils of those who, to prevent an imaginary, might have excited a real rebellion, by violent measures against Catholics, the bulk of the nation. He discountenanced all party distinction; he extended the full pro-

tection of the laws to Catholics, and displayed full confidence in their peaceable demeanor.

Before his arrival, those in power had shut up their chapels in Dublin; their priests were commanded by proclamation to leave the kingdom. Such as disobeyed were cast into prison, and threatened with greater punishment. These severities were offensive to Lord Chesterfield—his system of policy was not founded in partial views of human nature, or in those contracted sentiments suggested by religious bigotry.—It received no tincture from the violence of a party spirit, by which the judgment is perverted, and restraints are imposed on the kind impulses of humanity. Convinced that harsh treatment alienates the heart, but that gentle usage inspires confidence and gains the affections, he permitted to the Roman Catholics the free undisturbed exercise of their religion, knowing that the Irish, above all people, are to be gained by confidence, kindness, and liberality. The accusations that prejudice brought against them, the rumors of plots and insurrections designed by them, he listened to with calm indifference, or treated with ridicule. All parties ultimately concurred in admiring the wisdom and public virtues of this excellent viceroy, and cheerfully contributed their efforts to render his government easy and agreeable. In Parliament, business went smoothly forwards; resting the support of his Administration on its rectitude, he abstained from the pernicious custom of gaining partizans by reversionary grants. The supply asked by him was moderate, collected with ease, and managed with economy; and the surplus which remained was applied to the improvement of Cork harbor. Instead of raising new regiments, or demanding troops from Britain, he sent four battalions to reinforce the royal army in Scotland, supplying their place with additional companies to the regiments already on the establishment, and encouraging volunteer associations for defence; without augmenting the public

expenditure, the influence of the Crown, his own patronage, or his private emolument. The wisdom of his administration was verified by the result; no external enemy disturbed the public peace; a profound tranquillity reigned in Ireland; not a man espoused the Pretender's cause; while in Scotland thousands were in arms under his banners, and for a time seemed to threaten the overthrow of the Protestant establishment in England.

The boon to Ireland of such a governor, as it had been extorted from the British Cabinet, by the necessity of circumstances, was recalled as soon as that necessity ceased; nine days after the celebrated battle of Culloden, the amiable Stanhope departed from this kingdom, followed by the regret, the prayers, and good wishes of a crowd of attending and sorrowful spectators; to perpetuate his virtues and the gratitude of the nation, his bust was placed in the castle of Dublin, at the public expense.

Under Lord Chesterfield's government, the contest between English and Irish interest happily lay dormant; but after these halcyon days, it revived in full force; the chief management of the former devolved from Primate Boulter to Primate Hoadly, and from him, in 1747, to his successor, George Stone, promoted from the see of Derry; haughty, determined, and devoted to his party, this prelate scrupled at no means for the accomplishment of his purpose; and regardless of his pastoral duties, and solely intent on politics, he sacrificed religion and morality to the confirming and gaining of adherents. His chief opponent, as leader of the patriots, was Henry Boyle, the Speaker of the Commons, afterwards Earl of Shannon.

About this period, a political question was started in Ireland, and carried with extraordinary virulence by the contending parties, and which called forth into public view a character conspicuously and eminently distinguished. To in-

crease the influence of the Crown, innovations were made in the charter of the city of Dublin, in the reign of Charles the Second, by depriving the Commons of the power of choosing the city magistrates, and placing it in the Board of Aldermen; subject in its exercise, upon each election, to the approbation of the Chief Governor and Privy Council. Charles Lucas, an apothecary, anxious for the rights of the citizens, into whose Common Council he was admitted, proceeded to inquire whether other encroachments had not been made on the rights of his fellow-citizens, and which had not the sanction of a law to justify them. Having satisfied himself by diligently searching their ancient records, that his apprehensions were well founded, he published his discoveries; the consequence of which was a violent contest between the Commons and Aldermen, and the former struggled in vain to regain their lost privileges. The exertions of Lucas, in every stage of the business, rendered him so respectable among his fellow-citizens, that, on the death of Sir James Somerville, he was encouraged to declare himself a candidate for a seat in Parliament; and particularly distinguished himself, not only by the boldness of his speeches, but still more so, by a number of addresses to his countrymen; in some of these he particularly considered the several branches of the Constitution, and pointed out the encroachments of the British legislature. Government, alarmed at his boldness, determined to crush him; and the most obnoxious passages were selected from his writings, and made the subject of parliamentary inquiry. The Commons voted him an enemy to his country, and addressed the Lord Lieutenant for an order to prosecute him, by the Attorney-General. The universal esteem in which he was held could not screen him from ministerial vengeance; he was driven from Ireland; but having spent some years in banishment, he returned to his country, on the death of the late King, and offered himself as a candidate for the city of Dub-

lin ; being again elected, he continued to distinguish himself by the same virtuous principles, for which he had been from the beginning so remarkable ; and died with the character he had preserved through life, of the *incorruptible* Lucas.

In the year 1753, a memorable contest took place between Government and the Irish Parliament, relative to *previous consent*. As the representatives of the people impose the taxes requisite for defraying the expenses of the State, they considered it their right to superintend the expenditure ; in order, if there should be a deficiency, to supply it ; if a surplus, to place it to the credit of the nation, and apply it, by bill, for the public advantage. This they did, not as a matter of favor or of courtesy, but by an authority, which they had hitherto exercised without any impediment, and which necessarily and plainly resulted from the trust reposed in them. In this year a considerable sum, after the demands of Government were answered, remained in the treasury, and the Commons framed a bill, in the usual manner, for applying a competent part towards the payment of the national debt. The Duke of Dorset, then Lord Lieutenant, told the Parliament, that His Majesty "*consented*, and recommended to them to apply it to the reduction of the national debt." As this implied a right inherent in His Majesty to dispose of the money as he thought proper, the proposal was accounted an invasion of the privileges of the House of Commons ; no notice was taken of the direction given by Dorset, but the bill was sent over to England as usual, without any notice taken of His Majesty's consent ; there, however, this very material alteration was made, and the word '*consent*' introduced into it. The Commons at this time did not oppose so essential an alteration ; but next year, on its being repeated, the bill was rejected. Government was now at the utmost pains to defend the measure they had adopted ; and the press teemed with their pamphlets in justification of what they had done ; the

controversy, however, was terminated by His Majesty, by his letters patent, taking the money which had been the subject of dispute out of the treasury.

To increase the discontent, occasioned by withdrawing the public money from Ireland, the favorites of the popular cause who held places under Government, were shortly displaced, and the Primate was urgent with the Lord Lieutenant, to carry the plan to a more extensive execution; the patriots or oppositionists were studiously represented to the King as a Jacobite and Popish Party, aiming at the expulsion of His Majesty from the throne. To counteract such proceedings, the Earl of Kildare presented a memorial to His Majesty, stating the distressed and embarrassed situation of the country; that the face of the loyal kingdom of Ireland wore discontent, "not colored from caprice or faction, but purely founded on ministerial misapplication." This strong, though necessary measure, gave great offence to the Ministry; but the good of his country was at once its motive and justification, nor did it ultimately lose its effect upon the King; the popular clamor was at length so loud, that the Viceroy became alarmed for his personal security, and retired from the kingdom, as if he were making his escape.

The Marquis of Huntingdon was created Lord Lieutenant in 1755. Primate Stone was removed from the Privy Council, by order of the King. Boyle, the great leader of the opposition, was created Earl of Shannon, with a pension of £2000 a year; and John Ponsonby was appointed Speaker in his room; and several others of the patriot party were appointed to lucrative employments, and most of those who were displaced for favoring the popular cause, were with honor reinstated. Loud as was the cry of patriotism, firm as was the stand made by the patriots of 1753, against the encroachments of an English interest, yet lamentable is it to reflect, that when the boasted purity of those patriots was called into

action by their appointments, the majority of them became as recreant from the cause of civil freedom and legislative independence, as the most venal prostitutes to systematic corruption. Their unwillingness to promote the real independence of their country, appears from the rejection of a Bill brought into the House in 1756, to secure the freedom of Parliament, by vacating the seats of such members as should accept any pension or civil office of profit from the Crown. A spirit more patriotic appeared in another question; on the report of the committee appointed to inspect the public accounts in 1757, resolutions were voted in disapprobation of pensions improperly granted on the civil establishment, the amount of which exceeded £40,000 annually, of which a considerable part was given to persons not residing in Ireland. The Commons also with their Speaker waited on the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Bedford, with a request that he would lay their resolutions before the King; and received for answer, that "the matters contained in these resolutions were of such a nature, that he could not suddenly determine whether the transmitting them to His Majesty would be proper." An adjournment and consequent suspension of public business, till satisfactory answer should be given by the Viceroy, was carried by the popular party; who, after a warm debate, outvoted the courtiers by twenty-one voices. On this determination of the controversy, which was virtually a question whether the great representative body of the nation should be deprived of access to the Throne, by ministerial influence, the Lord Lieutenant sent a message to the House, that its resolutions should be immediately forwarded to the King. It is but justice to the Duke of Bedford to state, that he was the first Chief Governor who ventured to profess a favorable opinion of the Roman Catholics. Under his government, did the first dawn of toleration break in upon that suffering people, and to his administration must be allowed the merit of having first restored animation

to the members of that paralyzed body, which has since acquired such health, vigor, and strength of constitution, under the benign reign of his present Majesty.

Ireland, which for a period of nearly seventy years had enjoyed uninterrupted peace, suffered, in 1760, an inconsiderable invasion from a foreign enemy. The plan of invasion arranged by France, was formidable, both from the greatness of the armament, and from the ability with which it was concerted;—adverse winds, and the ability of Sir Edward Hawke, seconded by the bravery of the fleet under his command, frustrated those designs; the little squadron of Thurot alone reached the Irish coast; but its condition was feeble, and its fortune disastrous.

The early part of the reign of George III. was disturbed by the risings of several tumultuous mobs, who, under the appellation of White-boys, Oak-boys, and Hearts of Steel, riotously resorted to arms, to free themselves from the misery of oppression and poverty under which they labored. The attention of Government was more occupied in quelling the disturbances than in removing the causes which occasioned them—the army soon subdued them—the executioner performed his duty, and the country was restored to tranquillity; but as no efforts were taken to ameliorate the condition of the people, their continual distresses drove thousands of them to seek a better fortune in America.

During the administration of Lord Townsend, in 1768, a very material alteration took place in the duration of Parliament, which tended very considerably to promote the independence of Ireland. At this period a bill was prepared, and sent over to England, by which it was enacted, that the Irish Parliaments thenceforth should be held every seven years, and it was returned with the addition of one year, and from that period the Parliaments of this country were octennial; previous to this, the duration of Parliament depended

on the will of the Sovereign ; thus, from the moment of their election, the members became independent of the people, and under the refined improvements of Sir Robert Walpole, in the management of Parliamentary interest, the seduction became too powerful for most men, when they were at liberty to treat for life. The patriots anticipated the cure of venality in the frequency of their Parliaments, and the people hailed the welcome return of their power and control over their representatives. The affairs of Ireland now began to draw towards that crisis, which ultimately effected the revolution in favor of the liberties of the people.

In 1773, the difficulties under which the whole nation labored, began to be so severely felt, that an address on the subject was presented by the Commons to Lord Harcourt, then Governor of Ireland ; in this they told him, that they hoped he would lay before the King the state of Ireland, restricted in its commerce, from the short-sighted policy of former times, to the great injury of the kingdom and the advantage of the rivals, if not the enemies, of Great Britain. This representation to the Lord Lieutenant produced no effect, and Ireland for some years longer continued to groan under the burden of intolerable restrictions ; these had principally taken place in the reign of Charles II. At this time it was enacted, that beef or live cattle should not be exported to England ; neither were the commodities of Ireland to be exported to the American colonies, nor American goods to be imported to any port in Ireland, without first unloading them in some port of England or Wales ;—all trade with Asia was excluded, by charters granted to particular companies ; and restrictions were imposed upon almost every valuable article of commerce sent to the different ports of Europe. Towards the end of King William's reign, an absolute prohibition was laid on the exportation of Irish wool ; other restrictions conspired to augment the national calamity, but that which was most sen-

sibly felt, took place in 1776. There had hitherto been exported annually to America, large quantities of Irish linens. This very considerable source of national advantage was now shut up, under the pretence of rendering it more difficult for the enemy to be supplied with the means of subsistence, but in reality to enable a few rapacious English contractors to fulfil their engagements. An embargo was laid upon the exportation of provisions from Ireland, by an unconstitutional stretch of prerogative ; remittances to England, on various accounts, particularly for the payment of our forces abroad, were more than usually considerable. These immediate causes being combined with those which were invariable and permanent, produced in this country very calamitous effects ; black cattle fell very considerably, and yet customers could not be had ; the price of wool was reduced in a still greater proportion ; rents every where fell ; in many places it was not possible to collect them. An universal stagnation of business ensued ; credit was very materially injured ; numbers of manufacturers were reduced to extreme poverty, and would have perished, were they not supported by public charity ; farmers were pressed by extreme necessity, and many of them failed ; and people of every rank and condition were deeply affected by the calamity of the times. Almost every branch of the revenue had failed.

The attention of England was at length called to this deplorable situation of affairs ; and Earl Nugent, in the year 1778, undertook the cause of the Irish, by moving in Parliament that their affairs should be taken into consideration, by a committee of the whole House. This motion being agreed to almost unanimously, it was followed by several others, and bills for the relief of Ireland were framed accordingly. The trading and manufacturing towns of England now took the alarm, and petitions against any indulgence to the Irish were brought forward from many different quarters, and members instructed

to oppose it ; in consequence a warm contest took place on the second reading of the bills ; and as the Minister seemed to favor them, they were committed, though the violent opposition to them still continued, which induced many of their friends, at that time, to desert their cause.

Though the efforts of those who favored the cause of Ireland proved unsuccessful for the present, they renewed their endeavours before the Christmas vacation. They now urged, that independent of all claims from justice and humanity, the relief of Ireland was enforced by necessity ; the trade with British America was lost for ever, and it was indispensably requisite to unite the remaining parts of the empire in one common interest and affection. Ireland had hitherto been passive ; but there was danger, that, by driving her to extremities, she would cast off the yoke altogether ; or even if this should not happen, the tyranny of Britain would be of little advantage, as on the event of a peace, the people would desert a country in which they experienced such oppression, and emigrate to America, where they had a greater prospect of liberty ; on the other hand, they insisted, that very considerable advantages must ensue to Britain from the emancipation of Ireland ; and every benefit extended to that country would be returned with accumulated interest. The business was at last summed up, in a motion made by Lord Newhaven, in Feb. 1779, that liberty should be granted to the Irish, to import sugars from the West Indies ; this was carried, but the merchants of Glasgow and Manchester having petitioned against it, it was again lost, through the interference of the Minister, who now exerted his influence against the relief he had formerly declared in favor of ; various other efforts were made to effect the intended purpose, but nothing more could be obtained except a few trifling concessions, and a promise from Lord Gower that during the recess some plan should be matured, for accommodating the affairs of Ireland, to the satisfaction of all parties.

The face of Ireland was daily assuming a more awful and critical aspect. So long as the affairs of the country were under the consideration of the British Parliament, the feelings of the Irish nation were satisfied by the hopes of relief; but when they found themselves deserted by the Minister, their discontent was inflamed beyond measure. The few laws he had passed in their favor they considered mockery, not relief; and encouraged by the military associations, which had taken place some time before, they resolved to take such measures as would effectually convince the Minister, that they would no longer suffer themselves to be deprived of their just and natural rights. With this view, associations against the importation of British commodities were daily becoming more general; in consequence of which, the Irish manufactures began to revive, and the demand for British goods in a great measure decreased. Mr. Grattan, who had entered the Irish Parliament some time before, under the auspices of Lord Charlemont, contributed in a powerful degree to direct and animate the people in the assertion of those rights of which they had been so unjustly deprived. With a mind formed to embrace something beyond present objects, accustomed to trace effects to their causes, and to look forward to future consequences, he perceived that the root of those calamities which his country suffered, was not caused by a temporary stagnation of trade, but was occasioned by the unjust restraints imposed by Great Britain on the industry of Ireland; and that to attempt their cure by the petty and temporary expedients which the nation, and even the Parliament, seemed content with adopting, would be to roll up the stone of Sisyphus.

He was the first, therefore, who had the boldness and the wisdom to urge the Legislature to complain of these restraints; his efforts were seconded by the unanimous voice of the country; and such was the efficacy of a political truth thus urged, and thus supported, that even the whole force of British

influence was found unable to resist it. The Irish Parliament adopted and decreed the sentiment, "that it is not by temporary expedients ; but by a free trade alone, that this nation is now to be saved from impending ruin ;" and after some hesitation on the part of the British Legislature, the commerce of Ireland was, in part, opened to her children ; a temporary gleam of satisfaction was shed over the country, by this concession, as it was called, on the part of England ; for so accustomed had the people been to exclusion, to penalties, and restrictions, that a relaxation or suspension of any of these, was looked on as the conferring of a positive benefit, rather than the cessation of an actual injury.

Not only was Ireland at this time associated in arms, but it was also united in principle ; and the diffusion of bold, liberal, and enlightened sentiments became every day more extended.—The people now became conscious of their own strength ; and the idea was re-echoed from all sides, that a free trade could be of little use, if held by a precarious tenure. The repeal of the obnoxious laws was represented as an act of necessity, not of choice ; that when that necessity no longer existed, the British Parliament might recal the benefits it had granted, and again fetter the Irish trade, by restrictions perhaps even more oppressive than before ; and that to secure the advantages of a free trade, it was necessary that the kingdom should enjoy the protection of a free constitution ; for this the people looked up to the Volunteer companies ; and the idea of having such a glorious object in their power, augmented their numbers ; and many who had formerly scrupled to connect themselves with this body, now pressed forward to enter their lists. Hitherto these bodies having acted only in detached companies, knew not their own strength ; they found it necessary for their grand object, to form themselves into regular battalions, and establish a system of communication with each other ; long had the original cause of the Volun-

teers arming in self-defence, against a foreign enemy, been sunk into the more interesting object of asserting their constitutional rights, and procuring liberty for their country.

In the beginning of the year 1780, they entered upon the plan of general organization; they appointed reviews for the ensuing summer; they clad and armed themselves voluntarily; they cheerfully learned the use of arms, and freely submitted to the most exemplary discipline; they chose their exercising officers, and reviewing generals; and thus the foundation of Irish union was laid. They now openly declared their opinion on the state of public affairs; and the newspapers teemed with resolutions of the different corps, all in unison, declaring, that Ireland was an independent kingdom, and fully entitled to all the uncontrolled rights, privileges, and immunities of a free constitution;—that no power on earth, but the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, could make laws to bind them; that they were ready, with their lives and fortunes, to resist the usurpation and encroachments of any foreign legislature; and that they were determined not to lay down their arms, till they had accomplished the complete liberation of their country from the sovereignty of the British Parliament.

So crying were the distresses of Ireland at this period; so impotent was Government to relieve them, that the most important change of disposition, sentiment, and action in the people took place, under the eye, in defiance, and with the acquiescence of Government. By the melancholy consequences of the American war, our fleets had become inferior to the combined forces of the enemy; the English coasts were insulted; those of Ireland left wholly unprotected; the military establishments had been so drained, to recruit the regiments in America, that there were not 5000 forces in the kingdom, to defend the seaports even from the crews of single vessels; and when the town of Belfast, which had been visited

eighteen years before by invasion, applied to Government in 1788 for support against the common enemy that threatened again to invade them, the Secretary replied, "*Government could afford none!*" Thus Government, with respect to national defence, was abdicated; and the people at large perceived that they alone were to rescue their country from the approaching destruction which seemed to threaten her; their spirit soon supplied the defects and imbecility of Administration; they instantly armed themselves; every city poured forth its armed citizens; every day beheld the Volunteer institution expand, and a noble ardor was every where diffused; the spirit-stirring drum was heard through every province, not "to frighten the isle from its propriety," but to animate its inhabitants to the most sacred of all duties—the defence of their liberties and their country.

Government beheld, with unavailing regret, the effects of its own immediate work; to disunite the Volunteers was beyond their power, though it was the secret object of their wishes and attempts. As a body, the Volunteers, at that hour of generous enthusiasm, were unassailable to any bribe that could be offered them; neither were they to be intimidated; to disarray them, Government, agitated by contending terrors, invasion on the one hand, Volunteers on the other, did not dare. This patriot army were at length no longer molested, and men of all conditions and opinions enrolled themselves in its ranks with enthusiasm. That Irishman must be cold indeed, who can look to those days without a lively satisfaction, and a noble elevation of mind; when the spirit of his country rose superior to her distresses; when trade revived, and a constitution was restored.

ADMINISTRATION
OF
LORD VISC. TOWNSHEND,

COMMENCED OCT. 14, 1767.

IT has been objected, that the title which we have prefixed to the present work does not permit us to take the large and extended range, which we have sketched out in our prefatory address; that 'Belfast Politics enlarged' must still be confined to the political productions and political efforts of Belfast alone; that we cannot travel out of the title, and connect with Belfast the genius and the labors of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Kilkenny or Waterford. We should, however, hope, we may appeal from this contracted decision to the laudable anxiety of our readers, which will forgive a departure from the title of this work, if their taste be gratified, and their understandings be instructed. The politics of Belfast for forty years back were the politics of Ireland; and its mind and its spirit were the lights by which all parts of our country were anxious to direct their political course. These are our reasons and our justification for commencing our work with the elegant compositions of SINDERCOMBE—the productions of *his* pen, who enjoyed the confidence, and obtained the admiration of the North in a most distinguished and particular manner. The great HENRY FLOOD, before whose eloquence even

the genius of Grattan bowed with deference, and often with humiliation, was the distinguished writer of those Letters, which were published in the year 1770, under the title of *SINDERCOMBE*.

From such a collection as the present volume will contain, it would be impossible to exclude the labors of *FLOOD*. Though those celebrated productions contain a faithful and masterly delineation of the views and the practices of the British Cabinet during Lord Townshend's Administration, yet, for the better elucidation of those compositions to the understanding of every reader of the present day, we shall prefix a short view of the policy of that system, by the means of which the British Cabinet contemplated the ultimate conquest of the liberties of Ireland. The influence of the Lord Lieutenant of 1770 was to supplant the influence of an Irish oligarchy, composed of the great landed proprietors of Ireland, whose weight in the Irish Parliament enabled them to make such conditions with the viceroy as tended either to promote their own particular views, or to advance the general interests of the country. Partial as this control was over the demands and the designs of a foreign and avaricious Cabinet, it was still a *control* that was often attended with the best and most salutary results to Ireland. The pride of an ambitious aristocracy often stood with effect between the People and the Government. It was too formidable an obstacle to the ambition of the British Cabinet, not to provoke its resentment, and exasperate its patience. Lord Townshend, therefore, was selected as the fittest instrument to supplant *this* stubborn and insolent Irish oligarchy, and the entire treasure of the State was to be devoted to the corruption of the House of Commons, and to the establishment of a government ascendancy among the representatives of the people. The antient proprietors of Ireland, however, were determined not to die without a struggle; they rallied all their strength; they called around

them all the talent and spirit of Ireland—The Floods, Grattans, Burghs, Dalys, and Emmetts, were summoned to the field, and the society of 'Baratariana' was formed, which comprehended the most distinguished in genius and learning. The Letters of Sindercombe have often been compared to the celebrated productions of Junius; the reader will decide with what justice. It is evident that there is an anxiety in the writer to model his style after the manner of Junius. The same unqualified invective and unconditional abuse; the same industry in composition; the same construction of sentence; an imitation of the vigor and the spirit of Junius, distinguish the composition of Sindercombe.

The Irish historian gives the following view of the Administration of Lord Townshend: information almost essential to a full understanding of the elegant compositions of 'SINDERCOMBE.'

UNDER this administration was introduced a new system of governing Ireland. The choice of this nobleman for the purpose was in many points judicious. In order to attempt the arduous task of supplanting the deep-rooted influence of the Irish oligarchy, it was requisite, that the Lord Lieutenant, to whom that power was to be transferred, should be endowed with the qualities most likely to ingratiate him with the Irish nation; convivial ease, humor, liberality, and valor. The majority in the Commons grew daily less tractable by those who had the management of the English interest, than it formerly had been. Three or four grandees had such an influence in the Commons, that their coalition commanded a majority on any question. Formerly the principals used to stipulate with each new Lord Lieutenant, whose office was biennial, and residence but for six months, upon what terms they would carry the King's business through the house: so that they

might not improperly be called *undertakers*. They provided, that the disposal of all court-favors, whether places, pensions, or preferments, should pass through their hands, in order to keep their suite in an absolute state of dependence and vassalage. All applications were made by the leader, who claimed as a right the privilege of gratifying his friends in proportion to their numbers. Whenever such demands were not complied with, then were the measures of Government sure to be crossed and obstructed : and the session of parliament became a constant struggle for power between the heads of parties. This evil had been seen and lamented by Lord Chesterfield. His resolution and preparatory steps for undermining it, probably contributed to his recal on the cessation of danger, which his wisdom alone was thought competent to avert.

The primary object of Lord Townshend's administration was to break up the monopolizing system of the oligarchy. He in part succeeded, but by means ruinous to the country. The subalterns were not to be detached from their chiefs, but by similar, though more powerful means, than those by which they had been enlisted under their banners. The streams of favor became not only multiplied, but enlarged ; consequently the source of remuneration was the sooner exhausted. Every individual looked up directly to the fountain head. The innovation provoked the deserted few to resentment ; but they were bereft of their consequence, when left to their individual exertions. They took refuge under the shelter of patriotism, and inveighed against the venality of the system, because it had taken a new direction. The bulk of the nation, and some, though very few of their representatives in parliament, were earnest, firm, and implacable against it.

The arduous task, which Lord Townshend had assumed, was not to be effected by a coup de main : forces so engaged, marshaled, and commanded, were not to be dislodged by a sudden charge : regular and cautious approaches were to be

made: it was requisite, that the chief governor should be first popular, then powerful, before he could be successful. His lordship to those convivial fascinations, to which the Irish are eminently sensible, superadded as many personal favors, as his fiscal resources admitted. He judiciously countenanced the cry for septennial parliaments; in which the patriots anticipated the cure of gross venality by the return of their power and control over their representatives. Government indeed felt, that they could not decently withhold from Ireland what England had so long enjoyed.

Dr. Lucas had several times failed in his endeavours to procure a bill for limiting the duration of parliament. Now, however, a septennial bill was transmitted, and returned altered into an octennial one. There appears to have been some unfair manœuvring in the British Cabinet, in order by a side-wind to deprive the Irish of that, which they durst not openly refuse them. At the same time a transmiss was made of another popular bill for the independence of the judges, in which the English Cabinet had also inserted some alteration. It was expected, that the pertinacity of the Irish Commons for their privilege would have induced them to reject any bill, into which an alteration had been introduced. The English Cabinet was deceived; the Irish Commons waved the objection as to the limitation-bill, in order to make sure at last of what they had so long tried in vain to procure: they considered, that by objecting on this very account to the Judges' Bill, they kept up the claim to their privilege: for although this latter bill had been particularly recommended in the speech of the Lord Lieutenant, it was on account of alterations inserted in it in England, upon the report of the committee appointed to compare the bill with the heads of the bill unanimously rejected.

The return of the octennial bill was followed by a grateful address to the throne: and when the royal assent was given, the people took the horses from the Lord Lieutenant's coach

and drew him to the castle with enthusiastic exaltation. His excellency's popularity was not lasting. By dividing the channel of favor into a multitude of streams, the gentlemen of the House of Commons were taught to look up to the Lord Lieutenant, not only as the source, but as the actual dispenser of every boon. Not even a commission in the revenue of 40*l.* a year, could be disposed of but through him. Thus were the old undertakers given to understand, that there was another way of doing business, than through them. It was not without violence on both sides that Lord Townshend effected his purpose. The immediate sufferers termed this alteration in the system of governing an innovation, which they artfully taught the people to resent, as a national grievance.



LETTER

TO

HIS EXCELLENCY LORD VISC. TOWNSHEND.

MY LORD,

Feb. 24, 1770.

YOUR ancestors were lovers of liberty. You entered the world with a respectable paternal name. It was worth your while to take care, that it should descend unimpaired to posterity.

You have had the misfortune to have many enemies, or many faults; for you have been much censured. If you ask me how could such a man, as the persons whom you call your enemies describe, be appointed to the lieutenancy of Ireland, I will not answer with them, that you were appointed by an administration, the only uniform object of which has been, to injure or insult every part of the British dominions; that no other man would trust them, or that they would not have trusted you; that they knew you to be as pliant, as incapable; and that you would pledge yourself to the public with-

out a blush, for what you knew would never be performed. These are great considerations.—But something more was necessary. You had a brother: a prodigy of parts! In other particulars you may have resembled him. They would not make him the minister in England, and therefore they made you a viceroy here.

You began your reign by a public falsehood, and promised, in the speech from the throne, a law for establishing the independence of Judges. A bill with such a title came indeed from Great Britain; but in such a form that not one man was found so profligate as to defend it. Your hirelings have not insinuated that this was any species of performance; and therefore I will not prove that it was an aggravated breach of faith. You gave us, however, what you did not promise; the Octennial Bill. Notwithstanding this accidental difference, there was a perfect similitude in your sentiments with respect to these two laws; for you intended to give neither. As your inclination was the same, so your wisdom with respect to them was equal. You had the reproach of non-performance as to the one, without the honor of performance as to the other; and you tacked a dissolution of Parliament to the Octennial Bill, to assist you in carrying the Augmentation. Do not complain that you are charged with the insertion of the clause concerning the dissolution. You must submit to be responsible for every measure respecting this country, whilst you submit to govern it. Such, however, was the easiness of Parliament, that this promise which was not performed, and this performance which was not intended, though they could not clothe your administration with success, protected it for one session from indignity.

Your government had but one object; the augmentation of the army. I shall not enter into the merits of that measure, for I fear I should differ with too great an authority. Your professional partialities too shall be indulged. But let me ques-

sion your discretion. You proposed the measure in your first session of parliament; but not till you had alienated the persons, by whom you might have been sure to have carried it. A contest arose between English government and an Irish confederacy; and you made the *augmentation* the ground on which they fought. Let us compare the state of these respective parties at that time, and at present; and see how far your ability has increased, or your insufficiency has diminished, the strength of government.

You contended the first session at an unlucky juncture. An augmentation of the army after the committee of supply was closed, which was necessary to provide for an additional expense;—in a time of profound peace, when troops are the least requisite;—soon after a barbarous use had been made of the military in England, and an unconstitutional one in America; when the faith of government with respect to the Judges' Bill had not been maintained; and just upon the verge of a general election. This in point of time and circumstance, I say, independent even of the measure, was unfavorable ground. And on this ground, and in favor of such a measure, with what a host had you to contend? With the extended connexion, the revenue influence, and the popular manners of one leader; with the compact force and hereditary firmness of another; with the first title, the first name, and the first fortune of the nation, in a third—supported by the esteem of the kingdom, by the popularity of the capital, by the parliamentary influence of a reputable phalanx, and by the calm inflexibility of his own determination. You had the craft of Tisdall, and the rhetoric of Hutchinson to oppose you. And besides the reconciliated force of these formerly hostile connexions, and formerly hostile advocates, you had to cope with the strength and reputation of an independent body, armed with the experience, the genius, the weight, and the popularity of their leaders. Government stood alone; unsup-

ported indeed ; but as yet not prostrated by you ; and Government alone was beat only by four. Thus stood the force of Government at the end of your first session of parliament. How did it stand at the conclusion of the last ?

You remained here for two years to lay siege to opposition. You made two summer progresses, but without advantage. I will not describe these excursions circumstantially. Not only the page of history, but the newspaper of the day, would be disgraced by a detail of irregularities, as mean as capricious. You negotiated with the powerful, as if they were insignificant ; and with the honorable, as if they were like yourself. You treated with every man in the same tone. No wonder you treated in vain. In two instances you seemed to succeed. The old leaders of debate on the side of the court were seen again at the head of your troops ; and the rusty buckler of Tisdall, and the scoured shield of Hutchinson, were again held up in your defence. The wise, however, gave you no credit for this event. They did not allow you to have converted those, who were never of a different persuasion. One grew conscious that he was too old to oppose ; and the other, that he was too *notorious* to oppose with effect. As a soldier, you should have punished their former desertion ; as a statesman, you should have prevented it.

What was the end of all your preparations ? From the beginning of the winter to the day on which you prorogued the parliament, so commendably, in every material question, almost, you were defeated. After having had the power of the crown in your hands for two years, you were beat, on a critical motion, in the very last week of the last session, by a majority eight or nine times as great as that by which you had been beaten in the former session of parliament. An accession of weakness, my lord, which furnishes a proof of your talents for government ; and shows that your ability is equal to your reputation. Neither does it apply solely to the estab-

lishment of your character as a negotiator. Without this example, who could have thought that your northern star would have left you so benighted?

I will not enumerate your miscarriages, nor describe the wounds they have given to government. I will speak of that measure, in which alone you were successful, the *augmentation* I mean; and if you were deficient there, what shall we say of your defeats? Management is sometimes commendable because it is sometimes necessary. You should have remembered, my lord, that when Majesty capitulates, it is scarcely Majesty. You should not therefore have exposed your sovereign to the unkingly necessity of hearing conditions from his people. The excesses of the staff, and of absentee pensions, might have been corrected by a spontaneous, not by a stipulated reduction. If his Majesty were to descend too from his throne, and to relinquish a part of his prerogative in the disposition of his troops, it ought not to have been done palpably to make terms, and to article for the augmentation. By our laws, the honor of a peer is equivalent to the most sacred obligation; and by at least equal reason, so is that of the king. You suggested a doubt of its sufficiency; and by the proffer of your secretary, this sacred obligation of your royal master was recited in the bill of supply, that his Majesty in assenting to that law might give a bond for the performance of his honor: and register the mortgage of his word in the rolls of parliament. What atonement can you make to your degraded sovereign? A confession of folly will not be sufficient. There are stations in which incapacity is criminal. You should have explored your head and your heart, before you hazarded the dignity of the crown on either. If you are not too worthless to have a friend, and too despicable to have an enemy, you might have found one, from whose kindness or from whose censure you might have extracted counsel. Unhappy man!

And is this what you call success? Is this the boast and triumph of your administration?

I have spoken of that circumstance of your government in which you exult. The rest of it, and particularly the last act, which even you do not pretend to justify, I will reserve for a future and distinct consideration. But that we may be the less surprised, I will touch, in the mean time, on some other passages of your life.—You never affected public spirit but once, and then you pretended to patronise the militia-bill in England. I am not going to charge you with tergiversation, my lord, nor to urge in support of that charge, that the ridicule of that law is now the favorite topic of your convivial moments. No, my lord, you are not an apostate. Some men are too dull for madness, and some too profligate for inconsistency. You never supported the militia-bill in truth; you only opposed the duke of Cumberland.

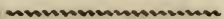
There is sometimes a curiosity of caprice and absurdity, which it is pleasant to observe. You went into the army. I will not say that it was the charm of order that caught you, or the regularity of military discipline that was conformable to your disposition. You chose it as a path of advancement. By the influence of your friends you were placed about the person of that great prince, whom I have just mentioned. He was revered by the public. He will be characterized to latest posterity as an hero. He was caricatured once, and it was by your lordship. What tempted you to this extravagance? Was it that no contradiction might be wanting to your character? That a soldier, you should insult your commander? That a slave to power, you should affront the favorite son of your monarch? That in his service, and of his household, you should do, what a generous and sober enemy would not attempt? Yet let me attribute it to the best motive. Let me ascribe it only to the operation of levity. Implacability is not the characteristic of your mind. Let me rather celebrate *the forgive-*

ness of your temper; and instance that Colonel Luttrell has only been referred to the parliamentary correction of a political bravo, like himself; whilst you spared his father, whom you had called to an unequal combat. But though I mention that moderation which your professional prejudices could not overcome, I must mention that rashness which higher considerations did not restrain. Why did you forget the monarch you represent? In the dwelling of the supreme magistrate of the metropolis, at a public meeting, dedicated to peace, why did you launch the thunder of a reversionary challenge at a venerable member of parliament, decrepit with infirmity? The dulness and servility of aldermen cried shame upon you.

From the impartial observer let me become a monitor, my lord; and above all things let me warn you against the avarice of fame. Nothing is so dangerous. I will make an error of your own my example. In your mind, I am told, it is your glory to have served at Quebec. Take care that it may not be your shame. You were third in command under the great Wolfe. You saw the military hope of the British nation expire. A great man might have envied him his death. A fiend only could have envied him his glory. I appeal to your lordship; for in this you must be my testimony, as well as my theme. You saw him struggling, according to his own expression, with a choice of difficulties. You saw him bending under a complicated and increasing infirmity. He had a noble heart, a wise head, and a performing hand. In such circumstances, and by such qualifications, when you saw him become the idol of a fond nation, and of an applauding army; when you saw him smiling in death, because it was accompanied by his country's victory; with what passion were you inspired? Did the nobleness of emulation seize you? Like Themistocles, did the triumphs of Miltiades deprive you of repose? Or, like Cæsar, did you weep over the tomb of Alexander? No. If you went to his grave, you went not to offer the applause of

surviving heroism to the illustrious dead ; but to supplant his monument, and defraud him of his fame. How did the people of England feel, the untutored people? His death filled his country with lamentation. After a considerable interval, the remains of that great man landed in Great Britain. No honor, which the living can pay to the deceased, was omitted. As if victory still followed him, the news of fresh conquest soon succeeded. Every part of the kingdom resounded with congratulation, except one. The region adjacent to the residence of the venerable matron who had given him birth, was silent. An universal sentiment of heroic compassion struck the people. They stifled even public joy, and would not suffer a sound of triumph to invade the solemnity of her just grief. Thus did that undistinguishing multitude, whom you affect to despise, mark their veneration for their departed hero ; whilst you, my lord, a brother soldier, and connected with him in command, had the justice and generosity to endeavour to defame him.

SINDERCOMBE.



THE following reply to the Letter of SINDERCOMBE was generally believed to have come from the pen of the Right Hon. Hely Hutchinson, provost of Trinity College, Dublin, and father of Lord Donoughmore, Lord Hutchinson and Colonel Hutchinson. It is not *accurately* ascertained who the author under the signature of *Broghill* was ; but the Provost was generally known at that period to be one of the most active partizans of the Townshend administration, and actually succeeded in laying the foundation of that property which has given such weight and importance to the talents of his children. SINDERCOMBE's rejoinder is a fine epitome of the views and the objects of the entire administration of Lord Townshend.

LETTER

TO SINDERCOMBE.

SIR,

March 6, 1770.

I HAD some satisfaction in reading your letter,—not that I admit the authenticity of your facts, or admire the force of your arguments, nor that I think the public will be better enabled to judge of the measures of government by the communication of your sentiments, or that the Lord Lieutenant will be reformed by the severity of your animadversions ; but, as a wellwisher to the person and administration of his Excellency, I am pleased to find, that a writer of no despicable talents is obliged to resort, for the materials of invective, to the stale refuse of newspaper anecdotes, and the exploded calumnies of vulgar detraction. You have collected the remnants of both with a malicious industry, and tricked them out in all the tinsel of antithesis, and the second-hand frippery of imitated periods. You have kept a reverend eye upon that great Homer of defamation, Junius ; and like your master, have created a monster of your own imagination, in order to show how ingeniously you can rail at it.

There is something very inconsistent in the advice with which you begin your letter !—that Lord Townshend should think it *worth his while* (your own elegant expression) to deliver down unimpaired to posterity, a name distinguished by the virtue of his ancestors, when, at the same time, you do every thing to prevent the benefit of your own admonition ; at once throwing dirt upon his reputation, and warning him to take care it may not be sullied.

A writer whose principal aim, like yours, is to rail, must trace up every political event to a corrupted source.—Accordingly, in rejecting some pretended causes of Lord Townshend's appointment, your very candor is no less malicious than your sagacity, in fixing upon that which appears to you to be the true one. The interest of families is generally the same, and a great station obtained by the joint reputation of brothers is seldom held upon ignominious conditions, or used for unworthy purposes.

Full of the best intentions towards the country he was to govern, he opened his first session with the promise of a law to secure the independence of Judges; and why that promise was not fulfilled in its utmost extent, must be asked, not on this side of the water, but perhaps of a quondam minister, whose Jesuitical politics seldom had any higher view, than to secure his own department from encroachments, by impeding the business, and diminishing the credit, of every other. The public, however, have little to regret, as no inconvenience has been known to result from this disappointment; and the attainment of ten such laws, to secure what was never invaded could not be considered as equivalent to that, which was never expected, though so often demanded, the limitation of parliaments.

It is difficult to determine upon what authority you so confidently assert, that his Excellency never intended, that is, never wished to give either. Is it the shrewdness of your own conjecture? or has it been suggested to you by that gentleman of popular manners, whom you represent so honorably, contending against government, in its own armor, and with its own weapons, at the head of his revenue legion of collectors, surveyors, waiters, searchers, packers, and gaugers? He indeed might have told you, that as to himself, he never wished success to the limitation-bill, notwithstanding his pretended zeal for it; that he had found more than one Chief Go-

vernor, on whose sympathy he could repose the insincerity of his bosom ; and knowing little more than the station of Lord Townshend, concluded, that would operate as it had done before, for the gratification of his private views, which were generally inconsistent with his public declarations.——Were these authorities, however, more powerful, the stubborn fact would not bend before them. We have the law, and the people have paid the honest tribute of their gratitude to him who disdained an underhand stipulation to obstruct it ; whose name will appear with unrivaled lustre in the records of parliament, and whose memory will be revered, while there is any sense of independence, or any abhorrence of oppression, in the yeomanry of Ireland.

You next tell us, that the success of the *augmentation* was the principal object of the present administration ; and you impute the miscarriage to his want of management, though you enumerate a catalogue of difficulties, which made success almost impossible. Thus hurried along by a rage to criminate, you either confound the charge with the justification, or (which is more likely) you suppose the incautious reader may do it for you.

Some circumstances unfavorable to the measure he could not foresee, and others, from a regard to his own dignity, he could not wish to prevent. Of the first sort were, the closing of the committee of supply (which could not be kept open until the enabling act, previously necessary for the augmentation of the Forces, was passed by the legislature of England) and the clamors raised against the army there and in America, for interposing, at the desire of the magistracy in both countries, to suppress riots and restore order, for which no civil authority was found sufficient. Of the second was, the clause of dissolution in the limitation-bill, agreeable to the true spirit of the law, as such, the object of the people's wish, and therefore entitled to the countenance of government.

But the great difficulty, and the great offence of all, remains to be accounted for,—the alienation of parties. The public have long known this was the real cause of opposition ; but until you appeared, no one was found hardy enough to impute it as the crime of administration. To see the business of the nation conducted without the venal concurrence of a rapacious confederacy, had long been the wish and the despair of the people. Those, who revered the dignity of the Crown, were sorry to find it degraded by the supineness or timidity of its representatives. Too many administrations had been distinguished by events of no greater importance than new accessions of influence to connexions already overgrown, and the shameful barter of the favors of government, to secure the repose, or to gratify the avarice of the Governor. No wonder, then, when a new spirit of activity and disinterestedness appeared at the Castle, that new maxims should be adopted, and new pretences held out, by the disappointed brokers in parliamentary traffic : without changing their principles, they suddenly changed their conduct ; and united all their strength to harass him, whom they could neither seduce, nor intimidate. The well disciplined cohorts of Leinster and Shannon fell into the ranks at the first tap of the drum ; and the motley bands of Ponsonby were cajoled and menaced into obedience. A body of independent irregulars joined the standard, not the cause of opposition ; and after disputing every inch of the ground, victory was decided in their favor by an inconsiderable superiority. It required no small degree of spirit to look this formidable alliance in the face ; and nothing but the greatest circumspection could have prevented its being stronger.

So far your capital objection to him as a statesman is without foundation ; yet admitting, as I do, that the success of the *augmentation* was his principal object, I should be at a loss how to defend his sufficiency, had he again been baffled. But to the confusion of your own argument, you are obliged to ac-

knowledge, that in this measure he has succeeded ; and let the voice of truth tell you how ;—with such peculiar felicity, as to give at once new vigor to the Crown, and new security to the People ; to unite in its support the real patriot by his principle, and the false one by his pretence ; to leave even jealousy without a fear, and ingenuity without one colorable objection. But it seems you are as much offended with the new modification of the measure, and the terms upon which it was obtained in the second session, as with its not having been obtained at all in the former. You are hurt to see Majesty descending from the throne, and capitulating with the people. I have never understood that an amicable agreement between the King and the subject, for the mutual benefit of both, has been ever considered as a degradation of royalty. The Crown has often made exchanges of a similar nature, surrendering prerogative for revenue ; and some of the greatest improvements of the constitution have arisen from such a commerce. Had his Majesty, or his representative, meanly stipulated with individuals for the support of his measures, and, according to what seems to be the great mystery of your politics, promised or bribed them into compliance, the King might then indeed be said to have descended from his throne, and to have prostituted the royal dignity.

Your prosecution against him as a statesman being closed, you proceed to arraign him as a senator, and soldier. An impartial account of his conduct in both these relations would be his best panegyric, and your fullest refutation. His ample fortune and splendid expectations, his voluntary engagement in an unlucrative and perilous profession, the whole tenor of his conduct in that profession, the spirit with which he relinquished, and with which he resumed it, the testimony of the Generals he served under, and of the armies he commanded, have all contributed to set a seal upon his character ; and are

such memorials to his honor, as the most ingenious malice will never be able to efface.

You are grossly ignorant of, or you grossly misrepresent, the motives of his parliamentary conduct. He patronized the Militia Bill, and the duke of Cumberland was no friend to it. This was the cause of their misunderstanding. He preferred the duty he owed his country to every other consideration, and discharged it faithfully, though the temporary disappointment of his military ambition, and the frowns of a prince, were to be the forfeit. When that prince discountenanced a measure so congenial to the English constitution, he opposed Mr. Townshend, not Mr. Townshend him. As to the rest, I will not disturb the little triumph of your fancy, but rather thank you for that play of words, which having led you from things to sounds, has spared me the trouble of an answer to an accusation too frivolous to deserve one.

There remain but two particulars more to be noticed, and I shall then follow you to a conclusion. Lord Townshend's correction of Colonel Luttrell, by a political bravo, is no less false than his launching the thunder of a reversionary challenge at Dr. Lucas. The mentioning of Colonel Luttrell's name in the House of Commons, was merely accidental: and from the circumstances of the time, and the occasion, could not possibly have happened from suggestion or pre-concert. It is in vain to refer you to all the members of the house who were present, for you knew the falsehood before you published it. As to the venerable infirm member, his own petulance drew upon him a reprimand, which his vanity chose to interpret into a challenge; yet Lord Townshend's words bore no such meaning, nor were so considered by any person present.

At your conclusion, you labor in the affected strains of un-genuine pathetic, to give a mournful description of deceased merit, at the expense of the living; and your impotence seems to increase in proportion to your efforts. *Disease and*

death, triumphs and lamentations, funeral obsequies, a venerable matron, fiends and heroes, Greeks and Romans, graves and monuments, are all grouped in the gloomy picture.

While the yet undecided fate of Canada and the British army were depending, the General who succeeded to the command, had no leisure to cull such flowers of rhetoric to deck the grave of the departed conqueror : but being himself a soldier, he paid a more judicious tribute to the merit of his colleague, by publicly testifying that his intrepidity and skilful operations had ensured the victory.

I must spend a few words more to detect another calumny which has bashfully retired from your text into an humble note, where you accuse him of usurping General Monckton's province, and ignorantly or arrogantly signing the capitulation. Before the death of General Wolfe, General Monckton was carried on board a ship in the river, wounded, as it was thought, mortally ; and the command devolving upon Lord Townshend, it was his duty and his province to sign the capitulation.

Having now done with your letter, allow me to say a word or two to your person, and to guess at your character, by the marks of it in your composition.

You are not the friend of the community in general, for you wish to see all power engrossed by a few individuals. You are not the friend of Irish liberty, or of English government ; for when you wish the force of the prerogative may be relaxed, you wish it at the hazard of the people's affections, and at the expense of the constitution of Ireland. Having told you what you are not, let me now tell you what you are.

You are the friend of successful corruption, and an enemy to Lord Townshend, because he does not practise the art of corrupting. You are the admirer, and humble imitator of Junius, and a fellow-laborer in the great cause of sedition : the signature you have chosen, is perhaps expressive of your dis-

position; take care that it may not be an omen of your catastrophe; since you would leave behind you, at best, but an ambiguous reputation, to be resolved by your friends into an assassin, and by your enemies into a suicide.

BROGHILL.

LETTER
TO BROGHILL,

WITH AN ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC.

April 3, 1770.

BY accident, I did not see your letter till I found it incorporated with my own in one publication; and dispersed together with it by some friend, no doubt, to Lord Townshend.— Were it not for some things that have happened since, and which make it necessary for me to trouble the public further, I should have been silent. But before I go to new matter, I wish to answer you on the old.

When you allow me to be a writer of no despicable talents, I am sensible of the compliment; and though you criticise my diction, I am ready to confess that the style of your defence is superior to the subject, as well as to the matter of it. Were you infallible even in language, I should not be inconsolable under your strictures; and your charges of inelegance have lost of their weight, since you speak of my *throwing dirt* on Lord Townshend's reputation, and of my being *kurt* to see Majesty descending from the throne. My style, whatever it may be, is however my own. Neither can I believe, if you thought me but a copyist, that you would have followed me so closely, as to emulate, it should seem, even the number of my lines. In this particular, I fear we are both exceptionable; our performances are long. I have some apology, however.

Mine is a copious theme ; a topic not easy to despatch, and impossible to be exhausted ;—the reproach of Lord Townshend.

How have you defended him ? You tell me that I have said nothing which was not published before. To what do you ascribe the staleness of my invective ! not to dulness, for you allow me ingenuity. Not to candor, or a reluctance to invent, for you charge me with the most active and licentious malevolence. You must then attribute it to that sagacity of malice which you impute to me ; and which saw, that the task of invention, though easy, was unnecessary. That character is unhappy, with respect to which, the only difficulty is to give novelty to censure ; and those charges are but ill refuted, to which the objection is their notoriety.

You say that my advice to Lord Townshend, to consult the reputation of his name, and the liberties I have taken with his character, are inconsistent. Were you so inattentive, or so inaccurate, as not to see that I intended not admonition, in that sentence, but reproof ; that I did not say it *is*, but that it *was* worth his while to consult it ; that I spoke of his ancestor's reputation, not of *his* ; and that it was not an absurd advice to repair what is irretrievable, but a gentle intimation of the irrecoverable evil of his early, and confirmed degeneracy. He is obliged to you for requiring me to be more explicit in my terms.

The promise of the Judges' bill you cannot deny. Neither can you deny the non-performance of it. You are conscious of the infamy of that transaction, and you only endeavour to transfer it to the earl of Shelburne. If the earl of Shelburne, because he was then Secretary of State in Great Britain for the Irish department, is to be censured for the failure of that law, he ought to be applauded for the attainment of the octennial-bill. The man who is responsible enough to be blamed, is responsible enough to be commended. But we consider our

Chief Governor as responsible to us. It is his duty never to promote, or to suffer, any thing that is improper, with respect to this country. He ought not to advise any such thing ; and he need not suffer it ; for he may resign. On Lord Townshend, therefore, we call for the miscarriage of that bill, as a breach of his honor ; and had he not made it impossible for us to be deceived, to him we should refer the success of the other. But he was industrious to obviate such an error—an industry which might have been ascribed to sincerity and frankness, were it not for the despicable absurdity of the imposture which is now attempted. You throw upon Lord Shelburne the loss of that law which Lord Townshend promised, and assume to Lord Townshend the acquisition of that law, which he did not promise ; which he never pretended at the time to expect or to patronize ; and which, since its establishment, he has uniformly reviled and ridiculed : except in a speech from the throne, where he seems to think it is his prerogative to falsify.

You say, that in my rage to criminate, I enumerate difficulties, which, instead of aggravating, justify his failure with respect to the *augmentation* in his first attempt. What was my argument ? That the existence of those difficulties at the time that he proposed that measure, was a proof of his folly. Could any indiscretion, but that of Lord Townshend, have created a common interest between so many discordant and contradictory parties ? And if the alienation of every man of consequence in the kingdom were a matter of design, would any statesman but Lord Townshend have begun the execution of that design, till that great point had been first decided. I am no advocate for great men. I will suppose for a moment, that some of them may be as unprincipled as you wish—What is the consequence ? Only that you can ascribe their opposition to another cause than that of virtue. But if it was not owing to their virtue, it was owing to Lord Townshend's absurdity.

He alienated the profligate, perhaps, by an unmeaning talk about principle ; as he alienated the principled by a shameless avowal of profligacy. The very being of that unnatural league at that period, was the demonstration of his incapacity ; and the smallness of their majority was the demonstration of the strength of government.—One showed what a powerful instrument he possessed ; the other, to how little purpose he possessed it : and instead of contradicting each other, they conspired to his condemnation.

You allow that the augmentation was his principal object ; and because it was carried, you insinuate that he was successful. But though this were his only object of pursuit, he ought to have remembered, that to be able to stand on the defensive, at least, was a necessary part of his duty ; instead of being defended, however, I asserted, and you cannot deny, that government was attacked in his second session, by an increasing majority. I asserted also, and with equal truth, that even the *augmentation* was carried, so as to be a disgrace, and not an honor to him. The measure of the augmentation indeed was carried ; but not Lord Townshend's measure. He subscribed in his impotence to the requisition of his opponents ; and the measure, dictated and sustained by them, succeeded. The ignominy of the conditions I have already described ; and I will spare the blushes of my sovereign, where I cannot excite those of his representative.

The infinite difference between Lord Townshend's measure and that which succeeded, I need not mention ; it is acknowledged. As originally proposed, the terms were injurious to the subject ; as carried, they are dishonorable to the Crown. Your patron endeavoured first to over-reach the people, and in the end suffered the Crown to be degraded. Which will he relinquish ? His candor in the first, or his fidelity or understanding, in the last transaction ? The option is melancholy, and yet to give him the alternative is merciful. So sensible

are you indeed of the principle of *truck*, or rather of capitulation, that disgraced that business, that you are obliged to avow, and therefore defend it. You say that the Crown has often made such exchanges, by surrendering prerogative for revenue. To the eternal disgrace of our monarchs, it is true that the people have some times been obliged to purchase their rights by subsidy ; or to extort them by arms. But the reigns of weak or wicked kings are the season for such stipulations. A weak king only will alienate his own rights ; and a wicked one only will encroach, so as to have it in his power to surrender those of his subjects. Take care how you slander your prince, to defend your patron. His being represented by that patron is sufficiently disgraceful.

You say, that an impartial account of his Excellency's conduct as a soldier and a senator, would be my fullest refutation. Why were you so brief in so material a part of your defence ? Why have you not condescended to be circumstantial ? Why have you *asserted* only, if you could have *proved* ? That simple narrative which you mention, but avoid, would have been more effectual than all your flourishes, if it had been safe. In whatever else we differ, in this, however, we agree. I appeal for his character as a soldier, to the Generals under whom he served, and to the armies which he commanded ; and particularly to that army which he commanded under General Wolfe. To that army I appeal, whether he knew the duty of obedience, or the dignity of command ? whether if General Wolfe deserved commendation, his lordship must not have merited disgrace ? and whether he did not thwart every measure of that great man whilst he lived, as well as endeavour to depreciate him in the grave ?

Lord Townshend became an enemy to the Duke of Cumberland, you say, because his Royal Highness was not a friend to the militia ; a species of persecution for opinion, of which I did not suspect his Excellency ; especially towards the son of

his monarch. The idea is so probable indeed, that I thank you for the suggestion of it. Why did you not also assert, that he did not perfidiously insult the person of his Royal Patron? The same attention to credibility might have been permitted you; and his Excellency has reason to complain, that you have not been uniform in his defence. As to the correction of Colonel Luttrell, let any man judge, whether a ministerial tool would have volunteered in the abuse of that gentleman and of the Middlesex election. I am glad, however, that by the mention of another fact, I have been instrumental in so authentic a declaration of the safety of one of our city representatives. I am confident his constituents were more solicitous for his person, than the venerable member was for himself. The challenge, however, was too notorious. But it is not a matter of surprize that it is retracted notwithstanding. Neither can the venerable member consider that retraction as a particular compliment to him. General Fitzwilliam and the father of Colonel Luttrell will inform him, that it is not the first time that his Excellency has *reconsidered* a challenge. To dwell upon his senatorial character, would be a superfluity of malice. For his abilities, I appeal to every man who ever heard him *mutter* in the senate: and for his principles, to his spirited concurrence in the persecution of America, and of Mr. Wilkes; and particularly to his zealous support of *general warrants*, in spite of the eloquence, the example, and the entreaties, of his unhappy brother. Let him deny this, if he can.

Not content with defence, you enter into panegyric. Some late occurrences make it essential, that the people of Ireland should not be misled at this crisis; and I promise they shall not. To them, therefore, I dedicate the remainder of this letter, which shall contain a detection of your misrepresentations, and of certain vulgar and inconsiderate errors.

To whatever degradation his lordship may in other things

have submitted, you maintain, that he scorned the degradation of stipulating with individuals. Where he or his advocates have found this idea I know not. It has not been the system of his predecessors. Nor is it the system of his friends, the ministry of England. It is as little founded in the facts of his administration too, as in the precedents I have mentioned. Not to speak of his Excellency's first winter, no sooner was his present secretary invested with his office, than he began the traffic. Lord Loftus, then a commoner, went to London. His door was besieged, night and morning, by the secretary. Those terms, with something more, which have since overcome Mr. Beresford, were pressed on Lord Loftus, if he would forsake the Speaker. That nobleman had not then learned the immortality he would acquire, by deserting at once his country and his friends. He answered like a man, that, occupied in the care of £20,000 a year, he had not leisure to attend an office under the Crown. When the Secretary first came to Ireland, I ask whether the Speaker and his friends were not offered the most ample terms for an implicit support, by this pure administration? Was not the office of president of the council, proposed to be created, with an exorbitant salary for the Speaker himself, by this enemy to corruption? Were not considerable private terms offered to every great power, and certain individuals also, by this disdainer of stipulation with individuals? Neither is this pretence less improbable, than it is false. Would his Excellency himself have purchased the lieutenantancy of Ireland, by resigning the English ordnance to General Conway, if he were averse to this species of traffic; or if it were not tolerated in the present reign? Consider his Lordship's character, and that of those by whom he is governed. The servile abettor of every unconstitutional measure, the tool of Bute and of every thing which wears the livery of Bute; the *practiser* of corruption in every period of his life, and at length the *missionary* is no-

minally governor. A Weymouth, a Sandwich, a Rigby, a Northington, a Hertford, and a Holland, are his directors. Are these the men who have forbidden him to stipulate with individuals? Are these men averse to corruption? or are they the most conspicuous examples of venality in a venal age? How have the fraternity of the present administration, how have the gang of Bloomsbury obtained their offices? We will readily believe that they seldom have refused, but we cannot believe, that they never stipulated for places. We cannot so utterly discredit every profession of our Sovereign, as to attribute their elevation merely to his choice. Or have the public been perpetually mistaken? and is it in the mildness of Weymouth, the purity of Sandwich, the diffidence of Rigby, the disinterested and elegant spirit of Northington, the munificence of Hertford, and the popularity of Holland, that have recommended them to each other, as well as to a pious and a discerning prince? A pretence to principle, in such a viceroy governed by such an administration, instead of being imputable to virtue, or even to the hypocrisy of clumsy vice, can be nothing but the insolent irony of a profligate and audacious venality—And, to speak of this kingdom, was it the austerity of Andrews, the patriotism of Hutchinson, or the consistency and wisdom of the Earl of Tyrone, that has marked them out to his Excellency's favor? The world will not easily believe, that motives such as these, induced his Excellency to promise a bishopric to the recommendation of a man, who is fitter to preside over a brothel than an university; or to be conducted by another, whose slippery prostitution has rendered even his infamy ridiculous. Nor will they believe, that the Earl of Tyrone, after having violated every engagement, private and public, into which he ever entered, has been selected for his consistency and honor; or that his abilities have recommended him, when they reflect that the elder Brutus must have been a less dissembler than the Earl of Tyrone has

been from his earliest years, if his Lordship's incapacity be counterfeit. His Lordship will pardon this trait of his character in a piece where he is not the principal. He deserves, and may receive a full delineation.

When Lord Townshend first landed, he threw himself into the arms of those men, whom his hirelings are now employed to vilify. If to suffer them to conduct the affairs of this country, be criminal, he is chargeable with that guilt: and if it be not, their removal is not worth a convulsion. Some time after, indeed, they differed. They say they relinquished him on public ground; he says, that he disagreed with them on private. Their allegation is more constitutional than his; and they are equally positive. They who know Lord Townshend, know how to estimate his assertion. But allow it to be true—it was not their principles, but their demands, with which he was dissatisfied. Why then does he talk of their principles? let them have been ever so flagitious, he would only be the more to be condemned, who preferred such persons originally, and who never disagreed with them but upon private considerations. The demands of these gentlemen, true or false, have been stated to the public; and, as stated by their enemies, are not very important. The Governor must have a high idea of the value of an office, or must form but a poor estimate of his own measures, and of public tranquillity, who would hazard either of the latter, for objects of no greater significance. And I will venture to prophesy, that the public, in the end, will lose by his adventure, even in a pecuniary consideration of the subject. But be this as it may, it was not principle by which he was directed. He went to the market, and his only objection is, not that it was a market, but that it was extravagant. Far from disdaining to stipulate, he condescended to *chaffer* and to *peddle* in corruption. There was something besides economy too at bottom. He considered every placeman as a chattel of government. He thought

that they had been purchased before, and that they were not entitled to a second valuation. It is not a principle of virtue, but of venal despotism, by which this sentiment has been suggested. It is not the vice, but the power to stipulate, which he dislikes. He does not wish for that exalted integrity, which disdains to bargain; but for that impotent and mean prostitution, which must not *stipulate* but *submit*.

Men, who opposed, not only his other measures, but even his favorite augmentation, are rewarded; whilst Lord Shannon, Lord Lanesborough and the Speaker, though they supported the augmentation, are punished. But they opposed in some other things, we are told; and they were in office.—Here is the principle. All men in office are to be taught, that their support must be indiscriminate. Corruption is so strong that it disdains any management. Placemen are openly treated as slaves, and are no longer to be led, but lashed into obedience. It is not now the hope of advancement, but the terror of deprivation, that is to be employed. The corruption of a free state is over; and the corruption of servitude is what we are now to experience.

Yet even this principle is not consistently pursued. And wherefore? Because, though this is the final object, there is another more immediate, to which a temporary sacrifice must be made. What is that? The destruction of every great man in this country. And how is this attempted? Government, like ancient Rome, has opened an asylum, into which all fugitives and betrayers are to be received. A Tisdal, and a Hutchinson, though they opposed, when bending under the weight of his Majesty's favors, are taken into grace, notwithstanding their demands, because they have deserted. Lord Loftus,—though personally rude to Lord Townshend, and though he opposed in office, not only where others opposed, but even where they did not,—is solicited to accept of favors from Government, on the easy condition of betraying his fa-

mily and his professions. All the friends of the leading men of this country are to remain in employment, notwithstanding their opposition, if they will forsake their connexions. The piety that encourages perfidy is suspicious. The purity that employs corruption, not only against every political, but every moral principle, is unsound. Political profligacy has hitherto preserved one refuge; a pretence to domestic virtues, and particularly to gratitude and friendship. Our spirited Administration disdains any resource but that of abandoned numbers. The consequences of this tenet to ministers are of little importance. But that prince is unhappy, who makes the treachery of his servants the ground of his confidence. He forfeits all title to fidelity, where otherwise he might find it; and may live, like Lord Holland, to see the principles he inspired converted to his ruin. What is the end of these contradictions in punishments and rewards? To destroy all the leading interests of the kingdom; that is, all national weight and dignity. Power is the crime of the Speaker; power is the crime of Lord Shannon; and power is the crime of the Duke of Leinster.

The shadow of influence, that is not dependent on the breath of the Crown, is not to be endured. A plan of arbitrary power has been systematically pursued by the evil genius of these countries. The subservience of the British Parliament was considered as already secured. To enslave all the dependencies, it was only necessary to establish the power of that parliament over those dependencies. This was accordingly attempted, and has never been relinquished. Another thing was necessary to the safe execution of this design. Every considerable individual, and all the inherent strength of these countries, was to be broken. Look at England. Is not every man of superior wisdom, virtue and consequence, proscribed? Is not Administration a collection of the most impotent and irreputable men? Is it not the ambition of the

Court to show, that the most despicable character can be created a minister ; and that the consequence of the individual is not a channel to distinction, but the arbitrary favor of the Crown? Is not this the principle of a despotic government? In a commonwealth, virtue is the only path to advancement ; and in arbitrary constitutions, the humor of the prince. A manly emulation is the result of one, and a venal servility is the consequence of the other. In a mixed government, such as ours, there are many qualifications which should lead to promotion, as well as the favor of the Crown. If they do not we cannot long be free. All the passions will be on the side of slavery, and the union of men's virtues will not be sufficient for the preservation of freedom, except a conflict can be maintained between their vices also. Unhappily we are come to the day of this trial. The furious spirit, which impels it, has made an attack upon every part of the British dominions at once, and seems to trust to universal consternation for universal victory. If the attack be general, so ought the defence. No man who has understanding, can doubt of their intention. No man who has a heart, can hesitate to resist it. See how England bleeds under this system already. See her degraded at home and abroad. See her constitution violated by ruffians with impunity. See the outcries of a mighty nation neglected, if not contemned. What then would become of such a country as this, if the first step of degradation were admitted?—We should sink in a moment into the vilest servility. To be governed by desperate adventurers amongst ourselves, might be our first, and would be our most splendid condition. But even that would be of short continuance. There was a time, and that not remote, when the natives of this country were excluded from office. Boulter's letters, and even the present state of our appointments, will show, that though the law be repealed, the principle continues. Were the present design to prevail, not an atom of influence would

be suffered to remain in the hands of a native. Let not men imagine that this is of no importance. The natives of a country may betray it; and the natives, even of greatest consequence, may sometime have an interest contrary to that of their country. But not often: not perpetually, like an alien; nor easily, like an insignificant native. The employment of the most considerable natives is therefore the best chance, which the community can have for good administration; and where certainty is unattainable, the better chance is always to be adopted. The system of these men is precisely the reverse. Judge from hence how honest it is in them to propose, and how wise it would be in you to accept it.

No man can be so simple as to suppose, that the present Ministry of England has been at the trouble to compose, or would be at the inconvenience to establish a system, merely for the internal benefit of this country, and for the aggrandizement of our independent gentlemen. It is but of late that these gentlemen have become favorites at court, or that the leaders of parties have become the contrary. The affections of a politician are always a matter of speculation. His sudden reverses of affection are still more suspicious. And as the Ministers of England have not even the ground of a personal acquaintance for an attachment to these gentlemen, it must, if any thing, be their principles which have captivated them. The idea is too absurd to be dwelt upon. Far from it. It is their own pride and power that they consult; and not the power of the independent gentlemen of this country, nor the independence of this kingdom. The very reverse is their object. They may flatter independent gentlemen for the present; and corrupt such of them as they cannot deceive, that they may be no longer independent. But when the point is carried, there will be an end of this courtesy. They will then be treated as the leaders of parties are now; and worse, in proportion to their comparative insignificance. They will

be reviled by Government for the profligacy of having supported Government. This is the uniform practice of the present times. Is there a man in England of character and consequence, who has not been wheedled, and even *wept* into office, in order to be degraded? and what is the object of all this artifice and intrigue? To break the confidence of the people. To make them weary of their principal men, that, like the commonalty of Denmark, in a fit of desperate disgust, they may make the monarch arbitrary. What is the preventive? Let the nation be wise and magnanimous enough to suffer their affairs to be conducted by those alone, in whom they can confide; and not to suffer any man to betray that confidence with impunity. And how is this to be done? By an unrelenting opposition to the men who betray them, and to the government which makes them traitors. But if the people are corrupt and pusillanimous enough to suffer men to be ministers, who betray them to their faces, and who boast of their prostitution, they will find so many who will betray them, that they will lose all confidence. What follows? A profligate and pernicious indifference in the people to public concerns, and to the men by whom they are conducted; until at length they fall into the fatal and enormous absurdity of trusting any man, because they think that no man is to be trusted. When a nation is come to this, there is an end of every thing. It is not therefore a matter of indifference, but of the last importance, which is before you. You complained of an aristocracy, and you wished to destroy it. To what end? That the power which they seemed to monopolize, might be divided among yourselves. Your feeling was natural, and the scheme, though visionary in part, was in part practicable. Your enemies wished to destroy that aristocracy too? But to what end? Not to divide the power among you, but to monopolize it themselves. You agree in the means, but you differ diametrically in the end.—You thought that you yourselves

had too little influence. They think the nation has too much. You seem only to coincide, where in reality you are opposed. Under this error, if you concur with them to a point, they will then desert you; and without aggrandizing yourselves, you will degrade your country.

Because three men had the apparent pre-eminence, you erroneously imagined, that all the power of the aristocracy was limited to three. I speak only for your benefit, and therefore let me speak freely. The narrow spirit of envy was excited by this narrow consideration of the subject. But you ought to have seen, that the power of each leader was only in proportion to the number of his adherents; and that the number of his adherents was only in proportion to his opportunities of serving and obliging those adherents. What is the consequence? The power of the head was employed in gratifying the members; that is, the power of the chief was the power of his partizans in effect. These partizans had their subordinate adherents, to whom they were in like manner obliged to transmit a portion of that light, which they derived from the principal luminary. And thus the power and profit of this system, though seemingly confined to three, descended, and was diffused to many. The system, however, was too narrow. I allow it. And the conduct of the undertakers was not unexceptionable. But this I say, that the evil was not capital as it stood; and that at worst it was domestic, and the remedy in yourselves. Now, if you had not sense or spirit to redress that grievance; neither will you have sense or spirit to redress the grievance, which may follow from a change. But there is this difference. That you had it in your power to remedy the evil of the former system; but that you will not have it in your power to remedy the evil of this system, if established. You thought, that the three chiefs could too easily unite against you, from the smallness of their number. You wished that number to

be increased to render such an union difficult. But you ought to have considered, that there are other, more important, and less remediable dangers; that the circumstance, which will impede a *pernicious*, will obstruct a *beneficial* concert; and that power may be split amongst so many individuals, that it would be impossible to unite them against the most ruinous attack of the most wicked Administration that Great Britain shall ever produce, to be a scourge to her dependencies. You ought to have considered, that a British Minister may possibly assist you against your own aristocracy; but that he will never assist you against himself. That in the former system you had therefore an appeal; but that in this you will have none. You ought also to have seen, that the rein of that aristocracy was every hour relaxing. That the number of men of property, consequence and education among you, daily increased; and that this being an infallible and easy remedy against the rigour of that form, a violent and uncertain remedy, to speak the best of it, ought to be rejected. Ireland is subordinate, says England, and England is the superior. We allow it. What form can be so proper, or so analogous to this mutual relation, as that the principal rule should belong to Great Britain, and that the subordinate government should be left to Ireland? And was not this precisely the case, when a chief governor came from Great Britain, and left deputies behind him when he went, who were natives of this country? This gave all due pre-eminence and authority to England, without stripping this kingdom of all national weight. The people of Great Britain are too just, and the monarch too upright, not to be contented with this. And if an arbitrary administration are not so; they deserve, not to be gratified, but opposed.

Banish all narrow prejudices from your minds. Because few of you can be Justices, you think you are not concerned

in the change. But if few of you can be Justices, fewer of you can be Viceroys. Even in this view, therefore, you will be losers. But you are not now to determine, with respect to one another, whether this or that man shall have power ; but whether the Kingdom shall have any. I do not contend for the name of Justices, but for the substance ; that is, for national weight and dignity. In whatever form this is maintained, I am content. But by the present system it must be destroyed. *Divide and govern*, is the adage of politics ; and you will be broken by this system into a multitude of insignificant individuals, without a principal, or possibility of union, in whatever extremity. Again, and again, therefore, I warn you, that if you are instrumental to this change, you will be traitors to yourselves. It may smile upon some of you for a moment ; but the public will soon see it in frowns ; and feel it in its ruin. I have no interest in the matter, but that which I have in common with you all. But that is sufficient ; and the counsel which I have given, I would ratify with my blood. Remember your prosperity or your ruin, as a nation, is at stake ; and act accordingly. The cause is great, and do not trifle with it. Time is irreparable ; do not lose it. To be undone, is miserable ! and, to be undone by these men, would be ignominious.

SINDERCOMBE.

INSCRIPTION.

AN INSCRIPTION ON A PILLAR WHICH IS SPEEDILY TO BE
ERECTED AT THE TOWN OF BULLOCK.

THIS Column was erected at the private expense
 Of Good Men,
To stand a monument of Irish Story, and
 A memorial to posterity
Of our happy deliverance from the scourge
 Of insolence and oppression,
By the unexpected, but not unwished for, departure
 Of George Lord Viscount Townshend;
Who resided in this land, as Chief Governour,
 For the space of Four Years: But at length
Departed on the 26th day of December, in the year
 1772,
Having on that day, being St. Stephen's day,
 The 15th day after his obtaining a victory,
 (Which the *Wise* called a defeat,)
And the 2d day after he pass'd the Money-bills,
 (Which he thought an exploit)
Embarked, *without ostentation,*
 At this little Port of Bullock.
He came to Ireland professing and practising
 Every mystery of corruption—
 Waging war against
 Power, Abilities, and Integrity;
And accordingly his administration was
 Absurdity, Impotence, and Profligacy.

During his residence, the *powers* of his office
 Frequently compelled him to confer favors,
 But a capricious nature and barbarous manners,
 Defended him from the returns of
 Friendship and Gratitude :
 He therefore never made

A Friend.

So that in a country, in which any misfortune
 Calls forth the affections of the People—
 Where they drop tears at the execution of
 Every Malefactor,
He, however, was
 Unassisted in his difficulties,
 Unpitied in his disgrace,
 And unlamented in his departure.
 He uttered falsehood from the throne
 In the name of the King.

From his closet did he promise
 The things which never were performed—
 His conduct in government was
 A disgrace to him, whom he represented,
 A reproach to those, who appointed him,
 And a scourge to those, whom he governed.—

He was a Mimic,

A Scribbler,

A Decypherer of Features,

A Delineator of Corporeal Infirmity ;

But he was not

A Statesman,

A Governor,

A Soldier,

A Friend,

Or a Gentleman :

He was victorious only when he involved
 His cause with the cause of
 private persons—
 And the ordinary effects of
 Sympathy and affection,
 (Usually so strong in this country)
 Became weak or doubtful,
 As they were damped by the influence
 Of his co-operation.
 His wisdom was fraud;
 His policy, corruption;
 His fortitude, contempt of character;
 His friendship, distrust;
 His enmity, revenge;
 And his exploit, the ruin of a country.

LETTER

TO THE EDITOR OF BARATARIANA.

Sic qui promittit, cives, urbem sibi curæ,
 Imperium fore, et Italiam, et delubra Deorum,
 Quo patre sit natus, num ignota matre inhonestus,
 Omnes mortales curare, et quærere, cogit.

ΠΟΛ.

SIR,

Dec. 31, 1772.

AMONG the manuscripts in St. Patrick's library, in which
 there are many curious pieces of antiquity, I happened, a
 few days ago, to find a character of Sancho IL Governor of
 Barataria, drawn by the pen of a contemporary historian,
 which I communicate to you for the instruction of his succe-
 ssors.

PLUTARCHUS BARATARIANUS.

SANCHO, the Governor of Barataria, was descended from

a noble house in Spain. But even the omnipotence of Majesty can transmit to posterity no more of *honor*, than that which is merely *titular*. Sancho was not the name which he derived from his family; neither was it that which was conferred on him at his baptism; but it was a title of extravagant and unsuitable elevation, furnished by a romance, and stamped upon him by the unanimous voice of the Baratarians, from the preposterous incongruity which they observed between his station and character—his person and profession—his duty and demeanor—when they saw the gravity of government guided by the levity of a ridiculous buffoon, and the *sober* concerns of a great nation resigned to the guardianship of a half-witted Bacchanalian.—The aptness of the title was the cause of its universality; and as by the exploits of his folly he departed from the name, so by the degeneracy of his nature did he extinguish the lustre, of his family. His father indeed was a person of figure and high reputation in Spain; but he had another parental example before him—that of his mother; which the natural impulse of his mind led him to emulate. The whimsical licentiousness of the one was preferred to the regular dignity, and honorable deportment of the other. And, indeed, from the first moment in which the mind of Sancho assumed the powers of selection, it was employed in chusing that which was most unfitting for him. Thus he became a soldier without fortitude, or generosity; a statesman, without wisdom or sobriety. Thus he was amorous without tenderness, and affected sociability without temper or good manners.—Into high life did he carry all the degradations of a degenerate mind, and mixed in humble condition the arrogance of exalted station. His arrogance, however, was not above *familiarity*. It accompanied him through the streets of the city, with the vilest associates; and he affected a freedom of carriage with the lowest of the Community, who would accept it, under the title of grace and con-

descension; and yet, though he was too mean for dignity, he was too insolent for equal society. Of that insolence, indeed, he had frequent occasion to repent; for it led him into many embarrassing situations, from which he seldom extricated himself, without some mortification or disgrace.

For some years he passed through life under the protection of contemptible talents; and was thought to be inoffensive, because he wanted wisdom. But he was a singular instance of a man's mixing malevolence with levity, and dedicating even his smiles to the injury of his companions. His friends (or those whom service had retained as his panegyrists, and who praised for subsistence) affirm, "*that taken unawares, in the sudden moment of surprise, he has been hurried into acts of kindness, and beneficence.*" But it is as certain, that he has repented of them speedily, and disclaimed them. And it was the universal opinion, that so soon as the fury of passion, or the surprise of commiseration, had passed away,—when cool reflexion, and native sentiment, reassumed the empire of his mind, the result was injury, injustice, and oppression. And indeed to the honor of human kind, we must admit, that Sancho was the only person who had fallen within our experience, whose sudden extravagance of passion was the peculiar article, with which the partiality of friends would clothe him, when they wished to exhibit him to public view. The crimes of most men are excused, or palliated, by thoughtlessness, surprise, temptation, or intemperance. Sancho's alone were enormous, in proportion as time, and deliberation, had leisure to digest them.

Whenever the wantonness of that fortune, which placed power in his hands, furnished him with the means of injury, he did not rashly discharge the raptures of malevolence, but held them long before his eyes, as a reversionary felicity, which he rather wished to hoard than to dissipate. He *dallyed*, and *played* with vengeance. He thought it a morsel too

delicious for immediate consumption, and reserved it to crown and conclude the luxury of the banquet.

Fortune, however, with all her favors, was not his *real* friend. If she raised him to high station, she raised him to public observation. Had she not made him a General, the whole world had not known, that he wanted every qualification of a soldier; that he was only capable of warring with the dead, and plundering deceased heroism of those laurels which himself could not wear. Had she not made him the representative of Majesty, a few only would have known, that he wanted wisdom, moderation, sobriety, and decorum; that his principles were not founded in justice, and that they were subversive of freedom; that the only things he had ever learned in camps, he brought with him into the cabinet,—*arbitrary law, and military government.*

His politics, as governor, were perpetually the result of his own humor, and his humor was rashness, resentment, and caprice. In the wide rotation of his inconstancy, he has placed his confidence, by turns, on every branch of his household. He has counselled upon the mysteries of state with every life-guard man in his train, and made his stables his council-chamber, as he once made his council-chamber, his kennel. If he ever assumed gravity of discourse, it was applied to playfulness, or childhood; and his jokes and good humor were the wages of his lackeys.

Here we shall repose the character of this extraordinary person. If the ferment of the times ever tended to exaggerate the features, let it be remembered, that *he* was the author of those ferments; that national calamities, it is true, are severe commentators on the conduct of him, who has produced them; and that he, who has stimulated a brave people by his oppression, deserves to feel the lash of their sensibility.

POLITICAL RETROSPECT OF IRELAND,

FROM 1769 TILL 1779.

THE Documents, able and eloquent, which we have now submitted to the perusal of our readers, give a comprehensive and satisfactory view of the state of Ireland during the unprincipled administration of Lord Townshend. This vicious nobleman, however, was little conscious that the efforts he was making to destroy the spirit of Irishmen, were the most powerful causes of that general determination, which in a few years after wrested from an unwilling government a free constitution and a free trade. We shall, however, before we come to the publication of those productions which rallied the scattered spirit of the country with the most complete effect, take a short retrospect of the history of those causes, of which the ablest men of 1779 and 1782 took such wise advantage, and which the arms of the volunteers alone were at length able effectually to combat. The Historian thus writes :

THE administration of Lord Townshend in seventeen hundred and sixty-eight was distinguished by a material change in the constitution. In early times the parliament of Ireland continued but for a year. Having discharged the duties required of them during that period, our representatives delivered up their delegated power into the hands of their constituents, to be disposed of by them in the manner most agreeable, against the ensuing session. When we look forward to latter times, we find the existence of our parliaments prolonged, from the beginning of each reign, to the demise of the sovereign, unless he chose to dissolve it by an exertion of prerogative. This must have been considered by the people as a flagrant violation of their rights. From them their representatives derived their political character. The time of its continuance, dependent on the will of the crown, was absolutely fixed. When expired, the authority with which they were

invested ceased to exist. If retained longer, the legislative power, however supported by the pretended sanction of their own act, was not delegated; being derived from themselves contrary to the nature and to the original design of the trust, it was usurpation. The nation in reality had a number of self-created lawgivers, not a single representative. This assumed power was not only, in the first instance, destructive of a radical principle of the constitution, but fraught in every point of view, with most pernicious consequences. From the moment of their election, the commons became almost wholly independent of the people. Temptations, enticing them from the paths of honor and integrity, multiplied. Self-interest had a full opportunity of sacrificing the public welfare at the unhallowed shrine of venality and corruption.

Government availed itself of the advantage it had obtained, and reduced to a system the methods of bribing the legislative body under the auspices of a baneful minister, who directed the measures of administration in the reign of George the Second. You now behold a sight most disgraceful to the nation, ruinous to its privileges and dishonorable to the character of individuals. Questions in parliament of the utmost consequence to the kingdom determined by a majority, purchased to sell their country by places, pensions and other pecuniary considerations. Various efforts were made to remedy this evil, and to bring back the constitution more nearly to its original principles. They had all been ineffectual, but, in the government of Lord Townshend, a bill was transmitted for limiting the duration of parliament to seven years; it was returned with the addition of a year. With this alteration it passed both houses, and received the royal assent. From that time, our parliaments are to be octennial. This change must operate in behalf of the rights of the people. Still the legislature are very much within the reach of government, and tempted to desert their duty by the arts of corruption.

In consequence of the passing of the octennial bill, the parliament was dissolved and a new one elected, which met in August of the following year.

This session, an infringement, of which they had frequently complained, and, almost in every instance, strenuously opposed, was attempted by government, upon the privileges of the commons. A money bill that did not originate with them was presented to the house. They rejected it with becoming spirit, after it had been once read. His Excellency was much dissatisfied and prorogued them repeatedly until February seventeen hundred and seventy one.

Lord Harcourt was chief governor of Ireland in seventeen hundred and seventy three. His efforts, in support of the measures of administration were so powerful that the opposition in parliament to those of them which were considered as unfriendly to the national interest, were quite feeble and unsuccessful. But the commons, however pliant to the wishes of government, were not altogether insensible to the general welfare. They saw the difficulties under which we labored, and, in December, upon being called up to the house of lords to be present at the passing of such bills as were prepared for receiving the royal assent, declared to the lord lieutenant, by their speaker, their desires, with respect to them, in plain terms. Among other particulars, they told his Excellency, that they hoped he would represent to the King, the state of this nation, restricted in its commerce from the shortsighted policy of former times, to the great injury of the kingdom and advantage of the rivals, if not enemies to Great Britain. They pointed out to him, that this hardship imposed upon us was not only impolitic, but unjust; and that they expected to be restored to some, if not to all their rights, which only could justify them to their constituents for laying on them so many burdens, during the course of the session. But this was not the season of redress.

Many years had elapsed since the peace of Ireland was disturbed by the calamities of war. It is favored with a temperate climate, with a fruitful soil, with a variety of excellent harbors, with materials for manufacture, and provided with inhabitants, active, spirited and intelligent. Notwithstanding, it was pressed by difficulties the cause of which was pointed out in the address of our parliament to the lord lieutenant.

From a period so remote as the reign of Edward the Third, British laws were enacted favorable to the trade of this country. Even in her treaties with foreign princes, England paid attention to the commercial interests of Ireland. Though our intestine insurrections were a great obstacle to these and every advantage we enjoyed conducive to national prosperity, our situation gradually improved. In the time of Charles the First, the customs very considerably increased in their value. The commodities we exported far exceeded those we imported, and our shipping was supposed to have increased a hundred fold. Manufactures were set on foot, lands became more valuable, there was not a country in Europe in a more promising state of improvement.

The pernicious effects, with respect to the welfare of the nation, produced by the insurrection of sixteen hundred and forty one, would have had but a temporary duration. With the return of peace, industry would have restored our flattering prospects, but the British restrictive laws enacted in the beginning of the reign of Charles the Second extinguished them. We must not send our beef or live cattle to England, a privilege we had long enjoyed, and which conduced much to our advantage. We must not export our commodities to the American colonies, nor bring commodities from thence without first unloading them in some part of England or of Wales. By the charters granted to trading companies we had been excluded from Asia. There is scarcely a valuable article of exportation

or importation upon which restrictions were not imposed, in respect to our commerce, with every nation of Europe.

Towards the latter part of the reign of King William, the parliament of England restrained the exportation of our woollen manufactures by an absolute prohibition. By this policy, not more cruel and unjust to us, than unwise, with respect to themselves, they forced these manufactures, hitherto, the principal source of our wealth and industry, to France, Germany, and Spain. The French, by means of smuggling, now supplied in abundance with Irish wool, were not only provided with woollen fabrics, quite sufficient for their own consumption, but vied with the English in foreign markets.

When thus deprived of our woollen trade, it was generally understood that England, by way of compensation, would encourage our linen manufacture. That she was little interested in the success of this our principal remaining branch of trade, is evident from the restrictions she imposed on our printed linens and sailcloth, and from the encouragement which she gave to foreign linens.

The spirit respecting Ireland, which prevailed in England a few years subsequent to the revolution, more strongly appears from the following circumstance, than even from the particulars already adduced. Two petitions were preferred to the British parliament stating it as a singular grievance, that the markets of the petitioners were spoiled by the Irish being permitted to catch herrings at Waterford and Wexford, and to send them to the streights.

How deeply the oppressive laws of the British legislature injured this country, appears from the records of our parliament which met in seventeen hundred and three. They complain of the total loss of trade, and of the decay of our manufactures. In the smallness of the grants, the neglected state of the country, and in the addresses of our legislature, the

poverty of the kingdom, for succeeding years, is conspicuously evident. Distress, and even despondency, strongly mark the latter part of the reign of Queen Anne. The pernicious influence of war and of other causes of national adversity are transient, the evils occasioned by commercial restrictions are lasting. Ireland continued to be pressed by difficulties through the whole of the reign of George the First. In his time, frequently, and once in that of his successor, the people suffered miserably by famine. If trade and manufactures are obstructed, tillage must decay as a necessary consequence.

In seventeen hundred and fifty three, and the following year, the influx of foreign luxuries raised the revenue so considerably, that the kingdom was disencumbered of the national debt. This appearance of prosperity was delusive. The taste for expensive living which then prevailed was most extravagant. Numbers of our principal merchants dealt upon credit. The balance of trade was considerably against us. In a very short time, the effect was visible. Individuals failed. Government was obliged to interpose, in support of public credit, which tottered on the brink of destruction. In promoting a spirit of industry, and reducing the price of provisions, the bounty given by parliament upon land carriage of corn and flour to Dublin, was of singular use.

By the late war we were involved in great expense; a peace establishment very oppressive followed; pensions increased; the revenue declined; in consequence, a debt was contracted by the nation, exceeding that discharged in seventeen hundred and fifty four, beyond all proportion.

How humiliating and how deplorable must have been our situation, during a succeeding period, when it appeared that Ireland remitted to England for rents, for interest of money, for pensions, salaries and profits of office, a sum double of what she gained from the whole world, by the commerce which she

was permitted to carry on through the indulgence of Great Britain.

Such discouragements as those which oppressed our trade no possible exertions could surmount. But in circumstances of this kind, men become indisposed to those efforts of which, in different circumstances, they are capable. A gloomy prospect relaxes the nerves of industry, debilitates the active powers, the spirit becomes depressed, without which it is impossible to plan or to execute those schemes conducive to national prosperity. Men habituated to suffering learn to bear their difficulties with a degree of indifference. Sunk down into a state of insensibility, the resentment against their oppressors, so natural to the human heart, subsides; they even cease to complain. But in seventeen hundred and seventy eight, the circumstances of Ireland, from particular causes, were rendered so peculiarly distressing as to excite in the minds of the people a strong sense of their unhappy situation.

The same spirit of domination in Britain, by which Irishmen had been so deeply injured, attempted to tear from the American colonies their natural and their chartered rights. They resisted, England determined to enforce her claims by the sword, and both countries were involved in the calamities of civil war. There had hitherto been exported annually to America large quantities of Irish linens; this very considerable source of national advantage was now entirely shut up. Under pretence of rendering it more difficult for the enemy to be supplied with the means of subsistence, but in reality to enable a few English rapacious contractors to fulfil their engagements, an embargo, which continued, was in seventeen hundred and seventy six laid upon the exportation of provisions from Ireland, by an unconstitutional stretch of prerogative. Remittances to England, on various accounts, and particularly for the payment of our forces abroad, were more than usually considerable. These immediate causes being

combined with those which were invariable and permanent, produced in this country calamitous effects. Black cattle fell very considerably in their value, notwithstanding, purchasers could not be had. The price of wool was reduced in still a greater proportion. Rents every where fell, nor in many places was it possible to collect them. A universal stagnation of business ensued. Credit was very materially injured. Farmers were pressed by extreme necessity; many of them failed. Numbers of manufacturers, reduced to want, would have perished, had they not been supported by public charity. Those of every rank and condition were deeply affected by the calamity of the times. Had the state of the Exchequer permitted, grants might have been made to promote industry and to alleviate the national distress, but it was exhausted to a very uncommon degree. Almost every branch of the revenue had failed. From want of money the militia law could not be carried into execution. We could not pay our forces abroad; to enable us to pay those at home, there was a necessity of borrowing fifty thousand pounds from England. The money which parliament were forced to raise, it was obliged to borrow at an exorbitant interest.

England, in its present state, was affected by the wretched condition to which our affairs were reduced. Individuals there who had estates in Ireland were sharers of the common calamity; the attention of individuals in the British parliament was turned to our situation, who had even no personal interest in this country.

In April seventeen hundred and seventy eight, Earl Nugent moved that a committee of the whole house should be appointed to consider the trade of Ireland. He supported his motion by observing, that the condition of this country was deplorable; this was visible in the fallen price of our lands, in the ruinous state of our manufactures, and in the want which universally prevailed. He asked, what power had behaved like England

towards this kingdom? To restrain by law, to confine the trade of one part of an empire for the benefit of another, was a case unprecedented in Europe. The house of Austria, France, and Spain, cherished equally all the states subject to their dominion.

The motion was agreed to almost unanimously, by the British house of commons. Those afterwards, in consequence of it, brought forward, were, that the Irish might be permitted to export directly to the English plantations or to the settlements on the coast of Africa, all goods, the produce or the manufacture of the kingdom, wool and woollen manufactures only excepted, or commodities of the growth or manufacture of Great Britain legally imported from that kingdom, as also foreign certificate goods, under the same condition. That all goods the produce of any of the British plantations, or of the settlements on the coast of Africa, tobacco excepted, be allowed to be directly imported into Ireland. That glass, manufactured in that kingdom, be permitted to be exported from Ireland to all places, England excepted. That cotton yarn, the manufacture of Ireland, be allowed to be imported into Great Britain. The design of the fifth was, that with respect to our sailcloth and cordage, we should have the same privilege. These motions passed unanimously.

In course of the debate upon them, it was observed that notwithstanding the real distresses of this country and the iniquitous laws by which we were oppressed, we had entered into the situation of England and shewn a willingness to assist her, even beyond our ability. One member concluded his speech with declaring, that a braver, a more generous, or a more loyal people than the Irish, were not to be found, and that he therefore flattered himself that they would be treated according to their high deserts.

Bills were framed on the motions mentioned above.

The trading and manufacturing towns of England now took

the alarm. Any enlargement of our trade they considered not only as prejudicial to their interest, but an encroachment on their rights. It was their desire, that Irishmen should neither be allowed to export their own commodities, or to import those of other countries. An invasion of it's rights, similar to those of which we complained, was about to separate for ever America from the British empire ; insensible to the admonition of this awful example, in their conduct with respect to us, it had no influence.

Upon the meeting of parliament, after the Easter recess, petitions were brought forward against the intended indulgence to Ireland, and members instructed to the same purpose. Upon this occasion a ridiculous circumstance occurred. Petitions appeared not only against the other Irish bills but that for allowing us to import sail-cloth into Great Britain. Without the knowledge of the member who proposed the bill, we had long enjoyed this indulgence, from which England received no injury. Nothing than this absurdity could place the unreasonable prejudices of the petitioners in a more striking point of view. Notwithstanding, their complaints had the desired effect.

Upon the second reading of the bills, they were warmly opposed. Mr. Burke supported them with his usual eloquence, and with strong force of argument. He said, the navigation bills, passed in the reign of Charles the Second, had deprived Ireland of every incentive to industry, and shut up against it every avenue to wealth. That yet, Ireland had promoted the interest, and defended the rights of Great Britain. She had assisted in conquests, from which she was to reap no advantage, she had emptied her treasury and desolated her land, to prove her attachment and loyalty to this country. For this, restriction and commercial bondage had been her reward. But, in describing her conduct and situation, he pleaded not for pity, but demanded justice. The Irish requested Britain

to be wise, not to be generous. The smallness of the Irish taxes had, he said, been pleaded against allowing them the benefits proposed. But, he observed, that if the internal opulence and external advantages of both countries were compared, it would be found that Ireland paid taxes, in a quadruple proportion more than England. She was taxed beyond her ability, and had not the means of payment. With respect to those who were for excluding this country from an equal share of our trade, he said, they had a strange opinion of the extent of the world, who thought that there was not room enough in it for the trade of two such islands as Britain and Ireland.

Aided by the influence of the minister, the bills were committed, but violent opposition to them continued, in consequence of which, they were deserted by a number of those who had hitherto given them support. The advantages obtained for Ireland, on this occasion, were of little importance.

Though the late efforts in it's behalf of the friends of Ireland in the British parliament had been unsuccessful, they renewed their attempts in our favour, previous to the Christmas recess. They urged, that independent of all regard to justice and liberality, England, from necessity, was called upon to remove the cause of our complaints. The trade with America and our colonies in that quarter of the globe was lost, it was therefore indispensable to unite in one point of interest and affection, the remaining parts of the empire for their mutual support and preservation. Ireland, they said, had hitherto been passive, but there was danger, if refused justice, that she would recoil upon her oppressors and throw off the yoke of those who were insensible to her calamities, and determined to drive her to extremities. That if this should not happen, the tyranny of England would be of little advantage to them, for the people of this country, on a peace, would desert it and emigrate to America, where they would carry along with them their ma-

manufactures, arts and industry. That by emancipating Ireland, instead of being merely despots of the soil and sustaining an irreparable loss, they would obtain very considerable advantages. They asserted, that every benefit extended to this kingdom, would return back to Britain with accumulated interest. Is it fit, say they, to sacrifice the interest of England to the monopoly of particular districts or to the clamours and absurd prejudices of any body of manufacturers whatever? Supported by these and other similar arguments, a free trade, that respecting the woollen manufacture excepted, was demanded in favour of Ireland. The strength of opposition reduced the prospect of these advantages to a motion made by Lord Newhaven, in February seventeen hundred and seventy nine, that the house should resolve itself into a committee to consider of the fitness of granting to the Irish a liberty of importing sugars directly from the West Indies. It was carried, but the manufacturers of Glasgow and of Manchester petitioned against this advantage designed for the relief of Ireland. It was lost through the interference of the minister who had hitherto taken no part in the business but now exerted his influence in opposition to it.

Before the close of the session, various efforts were made, particularly by the Marquis of Rockingham, to bring on again the affairs of this country before parliament. Ministry were forced to give some attention to them, nothing more however could be obtained from them than a sort of compromise. Upon condition that no farther attempts should be made at present, in the business, Lord Gower, president of the council, pledged himself, as far as he could be answerable for others, that, during the recess, a plan should be prepared for accommodating the affairs of Ireland, to be laid before parliament, at the opening of the next session.

Mean while, in this country, the public distresses encreased and matters hastened to a crisis. Every day we felt more

sensibly our unhappy situation and the oppressive injustice of England which was the cause of it. However, our feelings were in some measure suspended by the hopes of relief, so long as our affairs were under consideration of the British parliament; but when it was found that the English minister, in whom we confided, had deserted our cause and that these hopes were vain, the discontents of the nation, enflamed by disappointment, were exceedingly increased. Two laws had indeed been passed in our favour by the parliament of England, one of them permitting us to plant tobacco, the other for encouraging us to cultivate hemp. These being considered as a mockery, instead of contributing to remove our dissatisfaction were received with contempt.

The admirable spirit which in a short time was to retrieve the dignity of the nation and to reflect upon it distinguished honor, now began to appear. A resolution was formed for rescuing us from the difficulties by which we were oppressed, more effectual than any hitherto adopted. To convince England that it was possible for her to feel disagreeable effects of her tyranny and to save a million of money annually expended upon articles brought hither from that country was a very desirable object.

With this view, associations which had been entered into in a few places some time before for preventing the importation of British commodities and to encourage our own manufactures became universal through the kingdom. The public resentment was held forth to intimidate those who might be disposed, in this respect, to prefer their own private interest to that of their country. Some who were so base as to act this dishonorable part had the mortification to see their names published and their conduct exhibited as a mark for obloquy and for general indignation. In consequence of this effort of patriotism, our manufactures began to revive and the demand for goods from England, in a great measure ceased, which pro-

duced there a disposition to listen to the complaints of this country, very different from that which we had hitherto experienced.

But there was a voice in favor of our rights more distinctly heard, a voice which proclaimed through the land the injuries of Ireland and loudly demanded redress.

In consequence of our breach with America the Irish coasts had been insulted and our trading ships, unprotected, taken by their privateers. The communication even with England, was in a great measure obstructed. France had now determined to join her arms to those of America which rendered our situation and that of all the other parts of the empire more critical. That Ireland would be invaded, was more than probable. Thus exposed to danger we were destitute of the means of defence. The minister told us that the present state of Britain was such as rendered her incapable to protect us. The weakness of government, from the following circumstance was strikingly obvious. The Sovereign of Belfast having transmitted a memorial to the lord lieutenant describing the unprotected state of the coast and requesting a body of the military for it's defence, received for answer, that he could afford him no other assistance than half a troop of dismounted horse and half a company of invalids.

In this most disagreeable situation, a number of the inhabitants of this town, which had always been distinguished for public spirit, associated for the purpose of self-defence. The same idea had been conceived in other parts of the kingdom. Upon this principle, a few Volunteer companies were formed, who chose their own officers, purchased their own uniform and their own arms, and, with the assistance of persons properly qualified, assembled regularly on parade to acquire a knowledge of the military art. Such was the origin of the gallant band of patriots, unparalleled in the annals of the world, who, are the pride and the ornaments of our country, who have

rescued it from bondage and disgrace, whose virtues the historian will transmit with merited esteem and veneration to posterity.

The respectable appearance of the first Volunteer companies, the motive which induced them to associate, and the zeal which they discovered to acquit themselves with reputation in their new character, attracted the public curiosity, and procured for them universal respect. On no occasion was the influence of example ever more powerful. The spirit was diffused, and every day brought to them an acquisition of strength. Men of the first consequence in the kingdom were proud of being enroled in their number. Persons of credit and independent circumstances, instead of thinking it disgraceful, considered it as an honor to appear in the ranks.

Their unexpected increase presented a new and animating object to the view of these military patriots. That their country should be grievously oppressed by commercial restrictions, and that it's citizens in arms should use no efforts for it's deliverance, argued a degree of inattention to its welfare and to their own dignity, which appeared dishonorable to their character. The thought insensibly made a stronger impression on their minds, and they began to speak out with freedom their sentiments on the subject. To defend the kingdom from foreign invasion was to preserve it from only a temporary evil, to be the means of opening to it a source of prosperity, from which it had been long excluded, was not only to relieve it from immediate distress, but to procure for it a substantial and permanent good. From this animating idea new ardor was derived to the spirit of volunteering, insomuch that at the conclusion of the year seventeen hundred and seventy eight, our military associations were supposed to amount to nearly thirty thousand men. By this time a clear idea was formed of their principles, of their conduct and their importance. Whilst they professed their loyalty to the King, and

their resolution to protect their country from foreign enemies, they called for the restitution of our commercial rights. Those of them, even in the most straitened circumstances, bestowed that expense and time necessary to clothe themselves and to learn the use of arms, with cheerfulness and with spirit. Though subject to no control but inclination, they were perfectly obedient to discipline. For sobriety and decent demeanor, their behavior was not only unexceptionable but exemplary. They restrained the irregular, suppressed disorders, and maintained the execution of the laws with unanimity and with force.

A body of armed men, acquiring in a short space, such strength and consequence, commanding the confidence and the support of their fellow-citizens, both able and disposed to counteract the unfriendly views of government with respect to this country, were to the state an object of astonishment and vexation. In the infancy of the volunteers, they might have been suppressed, but in their present state resistance was vain.

As the Volunteers could not be controlled, some efforts were made to bring them under the influence of the crown, but they were treated with merited contempt. It being found impossible either to dissolve or to prevail with them to coincide with the wishes of government, it now seemed most expedient to assume the appearance of treating them with confidence. Accordingly orders were issued to the governors of the several counties to distribute among them sixteen thousand stand of arms.

Encouraged by the spirit of the nation, and pressed by the difficulties arising from the reduced value of their estates, the representatives of the people began to entertain new views, and to be inspired with different sentiments in respect to our situation. They met about the middle of October, seventeen hundred and seventy nine.

The speech from the throne produced in the house of commons a long and interesting debate in which the distresses of Ireland were placed in a striking light, and the necessity urged of adopt-

ing, immediately, some effectual measure for obtaining relief. At last, the sentiments of the house were happily expressed by a member who moved that the address proposed to his Majesty should be amended by these words, "It is not by temporary expedients but by a free trade only that the nation is now to be saved from impending ruin." The amendment passed unanimously. The lords concurred. When the speaker carried up the address to the Lord Lieutenant, the streets, from the parliament house to the castle, were lined by the Dublin Volunteers, commanded by the Duke of Leinster, drawn up in their arms and uniform. The acclamations of the people as he passed along expressed their wishes and their joy on this very singular occasion. The pulse of the nation beat high. A general expectation of redress was now diffused, at the same time, anxiety and suspicions were entertained that there was danger of being disappointed by the same spirit of tyranny in England which had hitherto kept this country in a state of such humiliating and oppressive bondage. That methods of compulsion would procure us justice, was the only solid foundation of hope.

Should our representatives who held the national purse, grant the supply as usual, for two years, there was hazard, notwithstanding all our efforts, that Great Britain would so long continue her usurpation. When the supply was granted, a prorogation might frustrate our wishes.

These were the sentiments which universally prevailed and were echoed through the kingdom. In parliament, those of the court party were averse to the measure. From resentment, the Dublin mob rose, committed several acts of violence and threatened vengeance against those who should oppose it. When the point came to be considered, a majority of the commons, some from principle, and others from necessity, appeared in support of it. A short money bill was passed and transmitted to England, where, though unusual and mortifying to the minister, it passed also. It was highly to the honor of the Irish public creditors that

they entered so warmly into the wisdom and propriety of this exertion in favour of the rights of their country, as to acquiesce cheerfully in six months' security, the period to which the money bill was limited.

Such was the state of affairs in Ireland during the recess of the British parliament. It met in December. A noble lord introduced the business respecting this country into the house of peers. He complained that the ministry had been shamefully negligent with relation to it, at the risque of the union and the prosperity of both kingdoms. He said that the time was critical ; that the Irish were driven to despair ; that the fate of their country had been committed to fortune, to chance or accident. That the circumstances of Ireland were singular which had long maintained, for internal defence, a military force beyond her ability, of which, contrary to royal faith, she had been stripped for the support of the American war, in which she had no concern ; nay, from the principle of which she had reason to fear it would be applied to the subversion of her own constitution ; that, in this state of weakness, the enemies of the empire threatened her with invasion ; that when she applied to Britain for protection, the answer she received was, "you must protect yourself." Thus finding herself exposed and deserted, she was saved by the magnanimity of her sons, who, of every class, voluntarily armed and united to save their country from destruction. He observed, that the Irish, now conscious of possessing a force and consequence to which they were hitherto strangers, resolved to apply it for obtaining advantages to the nation of which, by this exertion of spirit, they shewed themselves worthy. The government of Ireland, he said, had been abdicated, and the people resumed the powers which from them were originally derived, in which they were justified by every principle of the constitution and by every motive of self-preservation. Had the Irish, some time before, been gratified, in lesser matters, they would have received the favor with thankfulness, but the season of recon-

ciliation and of gratitude was now past ; whatever the British parliament might at present grant, would be received by the Irish not as a matter of favour but of right. He then moved a vote of censure on his Majesty's ministers for their neglect of Ireland. Though the motion was negatived, in the course of the debate upon it, Earl Gower, who had now deserted government, declared, that there did not exist a single doubt in his mind, that the censure contained in the vote was well founded. He said, in his own vindication, that early in the summer he had promised that relief should be granted to Ireland and had done every thing in his power to keep his word, but that all his efforts had proved totally fruitless.

In the house of commons, the minister was strongly pressed on the same subject. Besides the difficulties in which this involved him, he found himself greatly distressed by the short Irish money bill. He now gave notice that in less than a week he would move for a committee of the whole house to take the affairs of Ireland into consideration. Accordingly, on the thirteenth of December he brought forward his propositions relative to this country. Their design was to repeal the laws which prohibited the exportation of Irish manufactures made of or mixed with wool and wool flocks, from Ireland to any part of Europe. To repeal so much of the act of the nineteenth of George the Second, as prohibited the importation of glass into Ireland, except of British manufacture, or to export glass from that kingdom. To permit Ireland to export and import commodities to and from the British colonies in America and the West Indies, and her settlements on the coast of Africa, subject to such regulations and restrictions as should be imposed by the Irish parliament. Influenced by the circumstances of the times, he now took a decided part in favour of Ireland. In support of the above propositions he entered into a train of argument which pointed out their propriety, their justice, their necessity. He now spoke of our natural

and inherent rights and of the advantages from a repeal of the restrictive statutes which would result to both countries. Bills, in exact conformity to the several particulars in our favor proposed by the minister, were brought in and passed into laws.

When intelligence of the relief we had obtained from the commercial bondage by which we had been so long oppressed reached Ireland, the pleasure which the people felt on the happy occasion was expressed, universally, in the most sensible manner. Satisfaction appeared in every countenance. Our bright prospect roused the spirit of the nation ; industry revived and things assumed a new face, even before we could receive, in the way of commerce, any advantage from the free trade we had obtained.

But when the feelings natural to men in such a situation subsided and reflection took place, the public mind began to be inspired by the hope of obtaining a new and more important object.

It was suggested that a free trade could be of little use, if held by a precarious tenure ; to be of any real advantage it must rest upon a solid and permanent foundation.

The repeal of the laws by which England had confined our commerce was not a voluntary act, but the effect of necessity ; when that necessity no longer existed, the British parliament might recal the benefit we had received, and fetter our trade by new, perhaps, more oppressive restrictions. To secure to us the advantages we at present enjoyed, she must relinquish her usurped claim of a right to make laws to bind us, and restore to us the privileges of a free constitution. On the spirit and the force of the Volunteers, whose patriotism Irishmen revered, and which Britain, in the late instance, both felt and acknowledged, the nation chiefly depended for the gratification of these desires. They were not deceived. No idea could be more pleasing to these guardians of our liberties, who

determined to exert themselves in a cause so beneficial and so honorable to this country, and so worthy of the reputation which they had hitherto maintained.

The desire and the prospect of obtaining so glorious an object increased their numbers. They perceived that the time was most critical. Besides the force of America, in her efforts to subdue which she had been hitherto quite unsuccessful, England without a single ally, had to contend with the united branches of the house of Bourbon, whose fleets the preceding Summer rode triumphant in the Channel, whilst that of Britain, hitherto master of the ocean, was obliged to retreat to their own coasts for protection. They saw that from the comparative weakness of England, which was augmented by every accession to our military associations, we could alone hope for a complete emancipation. Here the cause and effect of the American war were pregnant with instruction. It had originated in a determined resolution of the English to tax the Colonies without their consent. In the course of it, the Colonies having demonstrated by glorious and successful exertions that they were not to be dragooned into slavery, were offered by the mother country full security with respect to the exclusive exercise, in future, of their legislative rights.

Other causes had conspired to increase the number of our Volunteers. They had received the thanks of both Houses of parliament; this sanction induced many to enter their lists, who, before, were scrupulous to connect themselves with a body of men that had armed themselves without any positive law, or the interposition of the ordinary magistrate. The same principle which had induced government, in the beginning, to endeavour to attach those to their interest whom they could not direct, prompted them to engage several of their friends in the Volunteer cause. Hence several new corps were raised. This object of dependence was a broken reed, for whatever might be the views of the officers of these corps,

the private men were animated by the same attachment to their country which distinguished their fellow citizens. Besides fashion, a sense of honor and of dignity, which was now inseparably united to the character of a Volunteer, operated most powerfully in favour of our military associations. They were become highly respectable, not only at home, but in the other countries of Europe. Impressions to their advantage which also contributed to render them more numerous were made by the neatness and the decency of their appearance. The use of arms rubbed off uncouth awkwardness and polished the address and manners even of those of them who had been accustomed to the most clumsy occupations.

Several publications tended to diffuse and to invigorate this patriotic flame. Of these, letters under the signature of Owen Roe O'Nial, distinguished by boldness of thought and expression, by a warmth of patriotism and a cast of original genius, engaged, particularly, the public attention.

LETTERS

TO THE MEN OF IRELAND,

BY OWEN ROE O'NIAL.

THESE celebrated letters have been attributed to Mr. Joseph Pollock, the present chairman of the County Down, with what justice we cannot determine. Those who have been the auditors of that gentleman's judicial powers, or of his talents as a public speaker, may give some guess at the reasonableness of the conjecture, that attributes to his pen the production of the ablest political essays which appeared in Ireland for the last forty years. They have the merit of originality in thought and in expression ; no affectation in style ; no humiliating imi-

tation of any writer, however celebrated and admired. They had the desired effect. They caused the nation to shake off its slumber, and assert its place among the kingdoms of Europe.

LETTER FIRST.

IF ever there was a moment of time, big with the very fate of any nation, the present is that moment to Ireland. If ever there was a moment when to interpose with the energy of soul and body, became every individual of the state, who has an understanding to perceive, a heart to feel, and an arm obedient to his will, the present is that moment to Ireland. Not presuming then upon my own wisdom, but thinking it now no presumption to offer my private opinion, and, in the name of the nation, to call upon others to give theirs in co-operation or support, I take up the pen with the boldness of a freeman, nor shall I finally lay it down, till the object appears to me either attained or unattainable; till I see Freedom established, or must lament its extinction; convinced that boldness will be not only unavailing to the state, but fatal to the individual. Sunk as is England, unhappy as Ireland has been ever since her connection with England, in this one respect, at least, each of them enjoys a portion both of dignity and happiness,—the liberty of the press, that censurate of the people, yet remains unviolated, for juries yet are judges. In their breasts lies that construction of malice, which constitutes the illegality, as it does the guilt of words or of actions. We have the whole field of inquiry before us, and we may question the propriety of tolerating the existence of those powers, whose bare extent to question was once, I may say, admitted a blasphemy. The Magistrate is now beginning to be sensible, that the actions alone of men are his proper object, for they are unequivocal objects of sense, and may be restrained or punished

by the laws ; but that opinions scorn his coercion, and, even where their tendency is dangerous, come not under his cognizance, till the action follows the opinion, and the law is actually infringed. He has besides learned from experience, that to punish the propagator of an opinion, is indirectly to own its truth, and its likelihood to make converts. Should, for instance, some visionary say to the world, that a great King imperial, born of an illustrious race, a race invited to the glorious task of confirming and establishing liberty in a country that more than once had risked its all for the obtaining of it, should he assert that he understood better the construction of a fly-trap than the law of nature and nations ; that he had more the obstinacy of a mule than the perseverance of a man ; more of the low mischievous cunning of a natural, than of the aspiring aim, the steady dignified wisdom of a philosopher ; more of the insatiable rapaciousness and sullenness of a tyrant, than the enlarged and well directed zeal, the glowing benevolence of a patriot King :—If, I say, some visionary, or some hireling scribbler, should tell us that such a creature existed, and bore the name of King, would a sensible loyalist be in wrath with the pretended portrait, or could the minister but smile ? It is not in nature ! would exclaim the former : The latter would calmly reply, we know it to be false. If, then, my countrymen, I am absurd ; contempt both from you and the minister will be my portion and my punishment. If what I offer be reason, it cannot be a libel. If, galled by the severity of truth, the minister would listen to the suggestions of an imprudent revenge, the sound of his first step will be a watch-word. Ye are MEN ! I will not insult you by instruction.

There is a timidity in politics, as in every other art or science, which, like timidity in common life, stifles in conception all grandeur of design, robs resolution of its hue, enter-

prize of its pith, and must end in inaction, if not ignominy and remorse.

He who sets himself down, and weighs every possible accident that may thwart his design, and where much good is promised, allows himself to be terrified at every appearance of evil, such a man may live harmless in a solitude, but he has not virtue for society. Let him retire to a cell! he was not made for action,—he may be sainted by superstition, but a spirited reformer will expunge him from his calendar.

There is no occasion in which this timidity will be more evident than in times big with event, or on the eve of revolutions. It is in such cases often amiable, I was going to say respectable. It then behoves every man to weigh deeply before he decides. It behoves him to consult the sensibility of his heart-strings, before he takes a step that may rend the tenderest of them asunder. It behoves him to consider well the value of his object, and to compare the probability of attaining it with the danger of the experiment. A thousand things it behoves him to consider, and, long, very long, must he be toiled in painful uncertainty, before even firmness can take courage, or decision can decide.

Let us then pause, weigh, and consider our situation, as well in ourselves as with respect to others. Let us consider the crisis. But when we have weighed and considered, the goal is before us: our part is firmness.

That the situation of Ireland is capable of improvement, that it is not exactly such as the warm imagination, the benevolent enthusiasm of a Plato, a More, or a Montesquieu, would have formed in their dreams of perfection and happiness, we have not a bankrupt trader, a half-naked peasant, or a starving manufacturer would have the courage to assert. We have however reason to be satisfied with our bankruptcy, our nakedness, and our famine, since Manchester and Glasgow are satisfied with them, since the Lords of England are con-

tent, and the Commons have joined in declaring them constitutional and rightful. But they have not yet denied us the liberty of thinking. I propose then to inquire, as a matter of mere philosophic curiosity; first,—Whether in the present posture of affairs, it is probable that Ireland might recover her Independence? and secondly, Is Independence worth contending for?

It may seem odd, that I do not first consider the value of the object before I am at the trouble of inquiring into the probability of attaining it. But, besides that there are fewer persons with whom the latter can be a matter of doubt, it would be of little importance to inquire, whether a certain change would be advantageous, if the improbability of effecting it almost amounts to the impossible. Were I to institute an inquiry, whether it would be useful to man to have power over the elements, I believe I should be able to find few fellow adventurers in the speculation. But if I begin by inquiring if such power could possibly and easily be obtained, the very novelty of the subject might perhaps procure me a hearing.

Before I enter upon these questions, I must beg leave to premise, by way of lemma, or introductory argument, a principle upon which I intend to build much, and which I shall therefore beg leave particularly and minutely to discuss.

The principle is this, that political bodies, whether sole or aggregate, whether composed of one person or a multitude, act uniformly from the narrowest kind of selfishness, and are totally incapable of a steady or uniform principle of generosity. The observation may be farther extended to individuals, (though no body politic) who from their situation have been under the necessity of acting more from political than moral motives. Morality is felt. Politics must be studied. The conscience of the man is natural. That of the politician artificial. The habit of reasoning only, is not favorable to feeling. The habit of being cunning is not favorable to strict-

ness of principle. In general, then, we cannot expect politicians to be either generous or just. To see how collective bodies will be most likely to act towards each other, but little pains are necessary. All persons are sufficiently selfish, but few are in any degree generous. The affections of most people are as domestic as their charity, so celebrated by Swift, "They scarce ever travel abroad." They end where they should begin—at home. Some however can feel for the little community to which they belong. A few for their country. But how many are they who are born for the universe? Shuffle these men into communities, and then will it be asked, if communities can be supposed capable of generosity? Can the majority be supposed either generous or just? Take the matter as between an individual of one nation, and the body of another nation, can it be supposed that the few attachments which he can have with a few of that other nation, to the majority of whom he must be at best very indifferent, will overcome the force of selfishness, and that he will divide his favors among a million, because he has a friendship for one? Even the generous are not displeased with gratitude, but here the obligation is scarce felt by an individual of the obliged, and the merit is lost in the number of obligers. There will be few favors, and gratitude will scarce exist. But will this individual be as little likely to injure as to serve a nation? I cannot think so. Selfishness is eternally in arms, while benevolence often sleeps on her post. In a thousand acts of injustice the individual will be sheltered and even applauded by the multitude of his associates. Fear of disgrace, which alone perhaps keeps him honest in private life, will make him dishonest in public. A palpable injustice will be lawful policy. Political villany will be love to his country. The honest man will often give up his private conscience to his sense of duty to the state. The same sacrifice will be pretended to by the villain. If such will be the probable line of conduct which

an individual of one nation or community will observe towards another nation, what must one nation expect from another ? “ Are not the chances, nay the certainties of coldness, unsteadiness, injustice, and inhumanity, increased almost to infinity ? ” The unlearned in arithmetic would be astonished at the amount of the combination. The steps of nations have been ever planted in selfishness, marked with injustice, and may be traced in blood. Their monuments are desolation. Their glory is the stain of humanity. — Let us compare facts with reasoning. They will confirm it to a miracle ! And first as to individuals, who have been politicians by necessity or choice. Most Catholic Kings have they not been the encouragers of heresy ? Has never Presbyter ruled with the pride of a self-created bishop ? Did never Reformer pull down the spiritual crown of the Pope, that he himself might wear it as part of his own, or enjoy its power under lank hair or a night-cap ? God’s vicegerents on earth have fomented rebellion against princes. Despots (those steady friends to the peace, good order, and subordination of society !) have in the dominions of others sown the seeds of anarchy ; or, what seems much more unnatural, those whose mean ambition rendered them enemies to equality, and who could have wished freedom had but one neck, if they had held the sword ; these men have planted, fostered, and protected Republicanism. Can Guatimozin himself, even in the generous ardor of his zeal, and the fire of his consuming indignation, can he restrain a tear for the weakness of humanity, when he relates what I am obliged to add, that he whom no allurements could shake, no dangers could dismay, who brightened by difficulties and gained lustre from defeats, who refused the proffered sovereignty of his country, and treated with contempt the support and friendship of her enemies, who, rather than see her ruin, could have embraced with a great despair, “ Death, in the last ditch of his country,” — that he, even he, of ever glorious memory, in an-

swer to the petitions of his new subjects, whom policy made it necessary to cultivate, could declare with the cold blood of an assassin, his deliberate intention of ruining the Irish wool-len manufacture, that the English might profit by it—could declare in effect, that he would wrest the morsel from the mouth of famine, to give another provocation to the sated appetite of gluttony? Can you believe this, my countrymen?—It is a fact, if there be truth in history, if the records of England be not all as false as some of them are disgraceful!—But heroes have been men; there have been individual villains in all ages. Nations will afford us a more amiable prospect. They cannot, as one man have conspired the ruin of virtue and liberty! They cannot have been so corrupt as to bid defiance to shame! They cannot have been so foolish as to show an example of tyranny, that might one day be turned upon themselves!

I grant there is a difference between nations and individuals. The difference is great. Individuals have been often and uniformly generous; nations never. Their uniform principle is policy, either real or supposed. Unless this is understood, their conduct will appear a chaos of inconsistency. But what will seem extraordinary is, that those nations who enjoyed most liberty themselves have been ever the greatest tyrants of others, and the provinces of a despotic King have generally been treated more kindly than those of free states. The reason is, that in a free state, every man is in a degree one of the government, and few men in power like to part with it. Most are willing to abuse it. The proud cannot bear spirit in others, and there are more men of pride than of dignity. To a despotic King all his subjects are pretty equal, provided they pay him his taxes; and if his government is rather mild, the provinces will share it. The free citizen of a free state will hardly put his subjects in the province on a footing with himself, their Lord and Governor in his capital. Common interest,

and even common calamity, unites the provinces subject to despotism. They have but one master to satisfy or guard against—opposition of interests disunites the Lords of a free state from their subjects in the province. These have as many masters as there are men in the superior state, and each would be satisfied, every individual would stalk in the mockery of fancied majesty. Every individual would enjoy his revenues and his taxes; every individual would propose his laws and his restraints; and all restraints would be salutary. The cry of every individual is unconditional submission! and the subject nation has no hope but in the impotence or subjection of its masters.

But to facts.—Athens the brave, the civilized, the polite, the lettered and the wise; she who defended the liberties of Greece at Marathon and Salamis, how long was she the tyrant of Sicily, and how cruel was her tyranny!

The world has seen those who for their own country despised death and were suppliants for torture, who in their own city “could brook the infernal devil as easily as a king,” even those has the world seen impose upon other nations a multitude of tyrants, each of them more insolent, more inhuman than a single one.

England sat by, a tame unconcerned spectator, while Corsica was sold by a republic, and deluged with blood by a monarchy. That same monarchy is now protecting the revolted colonies of England, whose tyranny forced them into a republic. She is protecting a republic, the very contrast of herself in manners, opinions, religion, prejudices and spirit, while those who took from a king their boast, that “they were free as their own thoughts,” and who have sacrificed kings themselves at the altar of freedom; they have driven Indians from their own woods, through zeal for civilization; Christianity and Justice have carried others into captivity, because their complexions darkened under a fiercer sun; and are now car-

rying fire, sword and scalping-knife into the country of their brethren, because they thought the leading-strings of an infant an incumbrance to a man; because they could not be grateful to them for the retailed gifts of nature, be in love with poverty, and in raptures with slavery.

If Honesty, an inbred steady principle of honesty, were to be expected from any nation, it might surely be looked for in one that was ignorant of the use of money; in a nation, three hundred of whose citizens, headed by a king, devoted themselves for their country, and repulsed the millions of Xerxes; in a nation where all the weakness of the woman and the mother fled at the name of traitor, and he was no longer a son who was no longer a citizen. Yet the Spartans have had their Helotes, and the English HAVE THEIR IRISH! Were the blood-hounds or the barbed arrows of the Spartan more severe or more keen to the body, than are the insults of the Briton to the mind? Boys hunted the Helotes: the Irish are the scoff of fools!

LETTER SECOND.

SUÆ quisque faber fortunæ est, is one of those truths which the experience of ages has handed down as a proverb.

What is true of every individual must be so of nations—
“Their fortune must depend upon themselves.”

It is a truth well worthy the deep consideration of Ireland—I have, in my former letter, endeavored to convince her by reasoning, and an appeal to historical facts, of what she should long ere this have learned from experience,—that whatever justice or generosity exists among individuals, it is vain to look for it in the mutual intercourse of nations. Their principle is policy.

It is time for Ireland to take thought for herself.

That Ireland hath been, and is, subordinate to, and depen-

dent on the imperial crown of Great Britain, and that the King's Majesty, with the consent of the Lords and Commons of Great Britain in Parliament, hath power to make laws to bind the people of Ireland, is a truth too melancholy to admit contradiction. That it of right ought to be so, was reserved for the modesty and good sense of an English parliament to assert, and would therefore be a blunder in Irishmen to deny.

That no nation can by conquest, or by any other means, acquire a right of perpetual dominion over another; that no consent or contract, however express or solemn, can bind posterity to their injury? that no prescription or length of time can sanctify oppression; that little deference is due to names imposed by the oppressors upon the act of assuming rights unalienable in their nature, and only overborne by force, or overlooked by folly; these are propositions which I shall not attempt to enlarge upon. Time, with most minds, gives a sacredness to error: inquiry then bears the name of impiety: but the idols of one age are trampled under foot in another, and the prejudices which once required a Locke to remove, are in these days but themes to the schools.

I shall not then war with the dead; nor shall I offend the delicacy of an English Judge, by doubting the propriety, or disputing the omnipotence of an English Act of Parliament. That would be "to oppose my private Irish Judgment to public English authority." And, in so plain a case, the opposition "must be virulent and factious." Authority must be ever in the right! The demand of Magna Charta was but a successful rebellion; the Reformation was an impious defection from the church; and the author of Christianity was a heretic and a traitor! Ireland then by right ought to be, nay more, for ever must be, subordinate to the sovereign legislative Parliament of Great Britain. I acknowledge it! my reason is a strong one; she thinks so herself; and who dare deny the

competency of her judgment? She thinks herself formed by nature an humble attendant upon England. She crouches under what she calls necessity. Her loyalty dares not form a wish for the preservation of her crown in the House of Hanover, united with the separate independency of her own legislature: because she looks upon this wish as hopeless. The very thought to her seems madness! The attempt, she apprehends, would be ruin!

I owe a deference to the general opinion, and shall submit to it; yet as all sound judgment on this question, can only be built upon experience, it seems not unreasonable to inquire, were it but as matter of speculation, into the fate of other countries, which having been nearly in the same situation with Ireland, endeavoured to mend their condition. One advantage will certainly result from the inquiry, which cannot fail of proving acceptable to a people, who have hitherto appeared more delighted with their fears, than with any other feelings of the human heart. It will lead us, by the consideration of our superior resources, to estimate infallibly the quantum of national punishment, likely to be superadded to our present burdens, by our masters, the parliament of Great Britain, for the efforts of this day, when their leisure and security shall permit them to turn their thoughts to us. In proportion to our superior power of resisting, will the means be of preventing, in future, the possibility of the operation of such a resistance.

A late respectable writer has already enumerated the natural advantages of Ireland. It appears that she possesses within herself, or immediately within her reach, almost every advantage that nature or situation can give, or that is necessary to make a nation rich, great and happy.

A climate of the finest temperature, a soil of most extraordinary fertility; mines that encouragement might convert into sources of national industry and national superiority;

seas that teem with fish; harbors numerous, safe, commodious, and well situated for commerce; and, to conclude, a people with capacity for every thing, who want but leave to acquire habits of industry, as persevering as spirited.

These are the natural advantages of Ireland. How few nations can boast so many and so great? Compare her rank and consequence in the world, with what these advantages might entitle her to. Inquire then whence arises the difference, and thank England, if you can, for the generosity of her protection!

Are either the United Provinces, or Switzerland, to be compared to Ireland in natural advantages? I cannot think they are. The former is but one-third, the latter only one-half her size. Ireland is an island, and such a one as I have described; rich in climate, soil, mines and harbors. Switzerland is in the heart of the Continent, and is poor in all these, the latter she cannot possess at all. The Dutch States are joined to the Continent; their shore is dangerous from its flats; does not afford them a single good harbor; and the frost binds up their commerce during a considerable part of the winter. I need not mention the fish which the lakes of Switzerland afford. The fisheries of Holland lie upon our coast. They enjoy more from their unchecked industry, than we from nature and the protection of England. The Dutch have no mines. The Swiss dont work theirs, except for their necessary instruments of war and agriculture. Neither Holland nor Switzerland produces corn for half their inhabitants. In the latter half the harvest produced by a stubborn soil is often destroyed by storms, and but part of the remainder is allowed by the climate to ripen.

The Swiss may be said to have neither commerce nor navigation; since the latter they have only on their lakes, the former is concerned wholly in necessities.

Of the timber of the Swiss I need not speak. They can

have no navy, nor do they require one. As to Holland, the spongy produce of her marshes is useless in trade or navigation. Her navy must be purchased by industry. Ireland may be as industrious as Holland, but she requires it less. She may raise a navy at home, if she cannot with more advantage bring materials from abroad. The climate of Switzerland may make a hardy race of soldiers or husbandmen, but to a nation that would aim at more than a penurious existence, it cannot be a subject of envy. The climate of Holland, marshy in its soil, and intersected by so many stagnated canals, is not wholesome. Some of their towns are formed on the soil left by the stagnation of rivers. In others the solid foundations of the earth seemed to have forsaken them, and they laid new ones. The sea threatens to overwhelm them. They oppose it with mounds, which require a continual repair, and dream not of danger though the failure of a bank would give them a second deluge.

Labor and industry are in Holland necessary.—They cannot otherwise exist. This, it is true, will keep them laborious and industrious. But what they are from necessity, other nations may be from nobler motives, and Ireland sets out from a point, which in Holland it required the labor and industry of years to gain.

Holland must be a drudge, as she subsists on the wants of other nations, and these, we know, are mostly artificial. She is their factor and carrier. She may suffer from their caprice. She must languish in their ill-humor. Their industry, or even frugality, would starve her. Ireland is more independent. She can subsist by her internal resources, though the world should refuse her either commerce or employment. She is rich in herself. Nature that made her an island, and gave her fertility, qualified her equally for absolute independence, and unlimited intercourse with other nations. She can sub-

sist without other nations. She can trade with them to mutual advantage.

Such are the natural advantages of Holland and Switzerland, and such are they compared with Ireland. America I shall briefly consider hereafter. Each of the former is surrounded by powerful empires. Each of them was once oppressed by all the rigours of slavery. Each of them burst her shackles, and baffled the most inveterate attacks of enemies whose power seemed to approach them with the irresistibility of fate.

Holland, inferior to Ireland in every natural advantage, and equal to about a third of her in size, threw off the yoke of the most powerful monarch then in Europe. The firmness and courage which she displayed will appear incredible to those who are unacquainted with the power of enthusiasm. The seven provinces we are speaking of surmounted every difficulty—they thought they could defend themselves. The ten other provinces, says Voltaire, would have a foreign prince to protect them, and are in slavery to this day.

One prince to whom they applied for assistance, was himself engaged in civil wars, and yet tottered on his throne. The extreme caution of another, in foreign enterprize, corresponded but ill with her magnanimity and resolution in domestic affairs; and from the reprimands she was daily giving to her House of Commons, for presuming to judge of the duty they were called to, she seemed little likely to tempt the wrath of a powerful tyrant or turn abettor of rebellion. The succors received by the states were accordingly for a long time feeble and clandestine. To obtain open assistance from Elizabeth required a longer struggle: and even the offer of their sovereignty. But before any assistance had been received by the States, they had gotten possession of what Doctor Johnson calls "the choice of Evil"—their darling object liberty. The very women had formed regiments for the defence of their ci-

ties; and, rather than again fall under the hated tyranny of Spain, the dykes and sluices had been opened, and the very peasants, says Hume, had been active in ruining their own fields by an inundation,—they preferred the mercy of waters to that of tyrants.

These same people have since withstood the most formidable attacks of a monarch who thought his power equal to universal empire. They have supported themselves with more than equal honor against the combined fleets of France and England. They have swept the channel of England, and their insults in the Thames have carried consternation to the capital.

In little more than half a century from the time, at which, unprepared as they must have been, they first ventured to take up arms against Spain in defence of their liberty, they beat one of their formidable armadas. They obliged it to take shelter in the Downs under the English flag. They retire for a reinforcement; they resolve, that the fleet of England shall no longer protect their enemy; they return to the charge, and the Spanish navy in its flight received from them a blow which at this day, after near a century and a half, it has not fully recovered. A few years more, assisted by a few more defeats, softened the obstinacy of Spain. She acknowledged the independence of the States, and in twenty years after they protected her provinces against France.

The Swiss, now that they are free, are more secure from attacks, than when they were dependant. They are defended by their mountains, and the barrenness of their country, by their poverty, by their valor, and by the mutual jealousies of the neighbouring empires. A partition is not easily agreed upon, and none will consent to their becoming an accession to the power of another, if such an accession were practicable. But it must be confessed, that of all the advantages I have mentioned, their valor alone, at the time they threw off the

yoke, seemed most in their favor. The enemy had possession of their country. The balance of power was then less understood, or less attended to, and their poverty and commercial insignificance must have been feeble inducements to the protection of their neighbours. Accordingly they had to work out their own liberty, and above three centuries elapsed before the House of Austria acknowledged their independence.

I believe there are few will deny, that America has already established her independence. She would not come over and prostrate herself at the feet of England, so England, with the magnanimity of a conqueror, appointed ambassadors to her by Act of Parliament. Upon England's condescending "to treat with armed rebels," they refused to treat with England. They had procured friends, and they preferred them to masters. For the situation of America in the beginning of the contest, hear her own unexaggerated description. "Without arms, ammunition, discipline, revenue, government, or ally, almost totally stript of commerce, and in the weakness of youth as it were, "with a staff and a sling only," she dared, "in the name of the Lord of Hosts," to engage a gigantic adversary, prepared at all points, boasting of his strength, and of whom even mighty warriors were greatly afraid."

When to this enumeration of difficulties, which, one is tempted to think, requires little addition, we subjoin the following; that these colonies were not more disunited by distance of place, than by difference of opinion, manners, spirit, religion, and government; that they were so disunited in all these, that it seemed the dream of a dotard to think of connecting them in one interest, or of bringing them to co-operate, if they could be convinced that their interest was the same; that they were exposed to the navy and arms of England on their sea-coasts, to the incursions of Indians (perhaps too justly enraged) on their rear, and, in some provinces, to the more dan-

gerous insurrections of their domestic slaves, whose dispositions to revenge must have been expected to burst on their more immediate oppressors ; when all these particulars, I say, are considered, besides those which America herself has enumerated, I think scarce any nation on the earth should absolutely despair.

Let us consider the present situation of Ireland.—I need scarce say, that there is not a maritime power in Europe to which her alliance would not, in itself, be an object of emulation. What then would it appear to the enemies of England? If Ireland should ask their protection, would they require to be sounded at a distance, or to be assailed by preparatory arguments and leading propositions? Would they think it prudent to act as they did by America, to stand by, cool spectators of our struggle, till they judged how far we should be able to persevere, or be likely to succeed? or, if they determined to assist Ireland, would they be obliged to have recourse to art in order to deceive a credulous minister, and to mask their intentions until they could declare them with safety? No, my countrymen: distant propositions, preparatory arguments, negociation, art,—all these are to us unnecessary! Conviction has long been confirmed. Their resolution is already taken. Their arms are already in their hands. They have crossed the Atlantic for their own interest and for the humiliation of England. Will a few leagues terrify them when their scheme is so near arriving at almost unhopèd for perfection! They were then at peace, yet they engaged in war. They are now at war, will they not carry it on? The sole question with them at present must be this: Will they chuse to visit us as enemies or as friends? For visit us they probably will.—Will they attempt a conquest to which they are probably unequal; or will they chuse the easier road, and offer an alliance, which will have every real advantage to be expected from dominion, without the danger of an unsuc-

successful attempt, or the inconveniences and hazards of the most successful execution? Will they not offer an alliance such as their good sense has been content with from America, and which they have thought worthy of supporting by a war with England? Such an alliance as, from its liberality, it will be the interest of the other European powers, at least, by a tacit acquiescence, to support? An alliance that will not contribute more to the weakening of an haughty adversary, and the disappointment of an insatiable monopolist, than to their own regal power, aggrandizement and glory?

And here, my countrymen, occurs an awful pause! What inducements hath British policy suffered to take root in the hearts of Irishmen, to enable them to resist such necessary and proffered protection? None, my friends! Loyalty, the fairest flower that can ornament the bosom of a prince, finds in Ireland its happiest soil. Personal attachment to the King of Ireland, and his illustrious house, is the cord which binds us to our burden, and furnishes to a British people the occasion of loading us without bounds or mercy. Had we as little attachment to the House of Hanover as Scotland, or Manchester, we had long since in despair implored the protection of other powers, for so long as the "Parliament of Great Britain can bind us in all cases whatsoever," the worst that could happen to us would be to change our masters.* The word is not

* It may be seen by Blackstone, B. I, p. 100, what an English lawyer thinks the necessary consequence of all dependance upon England! We are bound by every law she in her wisdom or wantonness thinks proper to prescribe. We shall soon, I suppose, be on a footing with those slaves of the Romans who were bound to the glebe or soil!—England will think proper that we should not depart from the soil, but be transferred with it by deed, roll, or indenture! This will save us a multitude of disputes about our property, for we shall then, like the Roman slaves, become perfect THINGS, and cease to be PERSONS. The English prints will then afford entertainment to those who can relish it. If any of us are missing from our stalls or lumber-rooms, we shall be advertised for, and described, as '*lost, strayed, stolen, or mislaid.*'—We shall be taken damage feasant, (perhaps rider and all!) and if we happen to die of cold and hunger, in an open pound, it will be at the suit of the owner! O Ireland! Ireland! Dost thou retain one spark of feeling, to make the oppression of thee a crime?

my own. It is by an English Judge and commentator directly applied to the situation of this kingdom and its subordination to England by right of conquest. But has England learned nothing from her late experience in America? Will she for ever trust to our loyalty alone, and will our King for ever leave us at the mercy of a British Parliament? As to the English people, the power of God has been displayed to them in vain. They seem to have revived the age of miracles, and to have left the Egyptians at a distance. All that should have inspired them with awe, humility and wisdom, seems but to have darkened their understandings, and hardened their hearts! But let it be our duty, my countrymen, to consider the crisis, and profit of it! Let us adore that wonder-working God, who, in the intoxication of our oppressors, has laid the foundation of our relief; and who, in the miscarriages of British tyranny beyond the Atlantic, has taught Irishmen the practicability of their own emancipation from the authority of an usurping English Parliament.

But *we are nearer to England*. I hear my countrymen lament it, and often have I lamented it myself!—Yet (indulge me, my countrymen, while I explain my paradox!) *on that very proximity does the weal of Ireland depend*.

We are near to England; but we are near to assistance also. The Atlantic rolls not between us and England; but neither does it roll between us and her enemies. These enemies are on the way. Before the wind changes they are here. Our proximity to England is to us, in the present posture of affairs, what the distance of America was, in the beginning of the contest, to her. The latter was a barrier against Britain; the former is a bridge for her foes. In this respect then we are equal to America. We have however an advantage from our proximity, which she never can derive from her distance. It is a Perpetual Guarantee against the oppression of any self-created protector. It is perpetual, because it depends not on

the policy or caprice of kings or of nations. It is fixed in the nature of things.

America might have been ruined by the treachery of France, or she may yet fall by Congress, as England has done by a Parliament.

Let Ireland be subject to her own legislation only, and one might venture to say she is free for ever. Her situation and size fit her for that moderate degree of strength and power which is most likely to be permanent.

Let these things be weighed, and perhaps that man could not be acquitted of presumption who would venture to point out another spot upon the globe, to which Ireland should now wish to be removed.

From this proximity of England, I would *deduce this truth*, which I wish to be engraven on the heart of every Irishman : ENGLAND IS THE ONLY power that can either enslave us FARTHER, OR KEEP US AS WE ARE. And this is the important moment when our own firm constitutional resistance will derive additional support from the dread of her enemies, towards shaking off the shackles of an usurping English people.

But, unless we entertain for each other a mutual and general confidence, unless we lay aside all rancor of prejudice on account of distinctions either political or religious, or attempt such a relief from those shackles, would be only to solicit confusion.

There are, however, many instances of states differing very much in religion, and yet united in strict civil confederacy and union. Scarce six of the cantons of Switzerland are Protestants, the seven remaining are Roman Catholics ; and, what seems a little extraordinary, the greater number of the Roman Catholic Cantons are democratical, that of the Protestant Cantons aristocratical in their government. In the United Provinces the majority of the people are either Presbyterians or Roman Catholics, and though Presbyterianism is the establish-

ed religion, yet the toleration or connivance which all sects meet with from the government, has produced a general moderation and peace, and in its natural consequences, has added power, grandeur and stability to the state. The state of Pennsylvania is equally various in its religion. The laws of this province are more liberal than the spirit of any other provinces. They give no preference to any sect. They tolerate all sects. All sects are therefore not only peaceable, but content. Most of the other states of America, so firm in their union against England, are scarcely more opposite than they are inveterate in the several prejudices and opinions which they carried with them from Europe. In short, from all the facts we can collect, our uniform conclusion must be,—that that nation is most likely to be great, powerful and happy, which finds political and civil moderation necessary to its very being. Where there are no sects or parties, I may venture to say, there cannot be sense, science, liberty or commerce. Where, from circumstances internal or external, different sects are nearly balanced in power, the laws must be moderate, and the spirit of the laws will become the spirit of the people. The nation will be in harmony within itself, and that moderation and good sense which will distinguish it in its internal government and policy, must characterize it in its conduct towards other nations.

It is very sensibly observed by a Roman Catholic Priest, (the Rev. Arthur O'Leary) in a late address to those of his own persuasion in Ireland, that "conquerors (and, let me add, traders and politicians) are of no religion." The English established Popery in Canada. The French entered into alliance with Presbyterians in North America; and, I dare say, would have done the same if their deity had been the sun or a serpent, an onion or a monkey. The Dutch, it is said, tread upon the cross at Japan, and the English make alliances with Moors and with Indians.

The French are, perhaps, even in religion, as liberal a nation as any in Europe. I judge not of them by their creeds, confessions, or articles of belief: God forbid that I should judge by these alone of the hearts or understandings of any people upon earth, who have public creeds, confessions, or articles! These are not always formed by the wisest or most religious people of a nation. The wisest and most religious are generally better employed. I judge of the French nation by the general conduct of the people; and I believe it will be owned that they are more liberal to Englishmen, than Englishmen—are to them. The absurdity of supposing that even conquerors would make violent alterations in private property, and involve themselves in the perplexed disputes and antiquated claims of families that have suffered by forfeiture, has been well exposed by the reverend divine just mentioned. Were the question indeed between two pretend-ers to the crown, the case might be different. He who succeeded must reinstate some of his adherents, and gratify others. This must be done at the expence of the opposite party. But a conqueror who is not able to crush the subdued nation at a single effort, will think himself happy in prevailing upon the people to remain quiet as he found them. He will make no alteration which he can avoid; he will avoid every alteration which can disgust or displease. What then is to be expected from even a powerful protector, that offers independence to a nation so divided into parties that no one of them has power to crush the others, supported as they would be, by the nation that formerly enslaved them? I say, that in this case, we might expect such a moderation as would over-rule every petty distinction or jealousy, and would unite the nation by COMMUNITY OF INTEREST. To make an alteration in the established religion, or to deny to all denominations of Protestant Dissenters that toleration which they at present enjoy,

would be the madness of folly. Those we speak of are neither fools nor madmen.

The Roman Catholics might, with justice indeed, expect a more complete toleration. But it would require peculiar delicacy to grant this without offending those Protestants who at present enjoy but a toleration themselves. The interference of Roman Catholic protectors, conscious of the prudence their situation required, must be of the most temperate kind. The alterations made would be gentle, gradual, and rather the effect of an insensible alteration of opinion and removal of prejudice, than an act of force or power in the state. And, from the co-operation of all these causes, I am inclined to think there would naturally arise a mildness of government, and a benevolence of toleration which is unknown to the laws of any other country in Europe, and which enthusiasm itself has scarce dared to think consistent with the littleness of human nature.

But, whatever may be the natural dignity and strength of Ireland, or whatever advantages she might derive from the present posture of affairs, there are some who cannot readily give up their attachment to the people of England, or think themselves justified in resisting them in their present state of misfortune, while there are others who yet dread her power, and tremble at her name. To the former I shall speak more particularly hereafter; and hope to show, that we are not bound by any ties of duty, gratitude, or honor, to remain in subjection to the parliament of England.

At present I would address myself to the latter.—That the power of England is not yet an imagination I readily will own. Great even yet is the power of England, and great is the memory of her glory! but her glory lives but in memory, and the sinews of her power are withered. Exhausted and foiled by America, whom, in the hour of her insolence, she treated with a contempt that would have robbed victory of its honor,

but has covered defeat with aggravated disgrace, returning reason can suggest but one consolation for her folly ;—that something yet remains for madness to squander, that there is yet a remnant which penury may save. The arbitress of empires may yet exist among nations ! the patroness of nations may yet be a housewife !

There was a time when the World and the Roman Empire were synonymous terms. There was a time too when the very name of Rome kept the Provinces in awe, though she could scarce have defended her walls. England has fallen by her own weight, which she wanted wisdom to balance. Those days are past in which her history went hand in hand with romance. France has struck terror into her conquerors, and has shaken the throne of her king. The English channel has become a term of mockery. It has seen the navy of England in its flight ! The navy of England has left her coasts to be insulted ! That the navy of England was able to secure the protection of a Port, has, to a sovereign of England, become a theme of congratulation !

While England thus protects herself, need I ask what protection she is likely to afford to Ireland ? If we remain by her bad policy in our present impoverished state, can she protect us from the arms or insults of her enemies ?

Have we not men in arms already ? Men whom England, and the slaves of England, would long ere this have disarmed, had they dared to do so ! Men whose spirit they now affect to approve, because they find their approbation is indifferent to them ! Men whose spirit must obtain a momentary protection, and to whom a very little time will render protection unnecessary ! Men who may yet teach England, that the soil of their own country benumbs not their courage ; that it is not on the plains of Flanders or America alone that IRISHMEN CAN CONQUER !

The subject, my countrymen, has risen upon me. I have

(I hope you will think unavoidably) been led into some details. My indignation, upon other occasions, I have found it difficult to repress. You will consider the design, and pardon any involuntary failure in the execution. But, before I take my leave for the present, allow me to ask one short question :

Shall we trust to other nations for a temporary protection, which (judging from human nature, and their particular line of conduct) I aver it to be equally their interest and their inclination to give, and the bounds of which, as I have endeavoured to prove, they cannot exceed ; or, shall we depend to eternity on the generosity of a nation who has shown herself as incapable of generosity as of justice, and whose folly has disabled her from performing the duties of either ?—She thunders forth the mandates of her OMNIPOTENCE ; but, is her providence so particular, so watchful, so active, and so benevolent, that we should leave to her more than the God of Nature demands for himself,—that we should leave agency to her, and address her but in prayer ? Is the night of religious superstition passed away, and must that of political idolatry usurp the rightful vicissitude of day ? Our night of both has been sufficiently long ? But the sun of England, in whose meridian beams our feebler light was lost, is now set,—perhaps, for ever : and the Hesperian star of America, which set with England, for a time, is now risen, a Lucifer to light us into day. It has moved, till it is vertical in glory, and points to our POLITICAL SALVATION !

LETTER THIRD.

YOU have heard, my countrymen, the speech of the Minister ! You have heard it, and I hope it has sunk deep into your hearts, and added fervor to that loyalty which is now the only cement of the empire, and which the consistency of ministers has therefore labored to destroy !

You must also before this have been acquainted with two political phenomena which this age has produced: some of our Irish common-law Judges detest so much all English importations, that they will not, on a constitutional question, admit a single construction that is liberal! But there is a second to which the first is as nothing. A *Chancellor* of Ireland, an Englishman, entertains such a regard to the Irish laws, (in their present state of purity) that he will not venture even to judge of them by equity and good conscience! Nay! where his sovereign has been unguarded in approving of exertions not the most constitutional, he will correct his Sovereign though speaking from the throne!

Lest, however, so rare an instance of integrity should be offensive to the Minister, I would beg leave to offer for it a very simple apology. His Lordship is keeper of the King's IRISH conscience. He knows the heart of his gracious master, and that, if he erred, it was but in words!

But to return to the speech, (from which it may be doubted if I have really digressed) I could wish, my countrymen, that, by connecting those parts of it which are, accidentally, thrown at the greatest possible distance, you would collect its beginning and end, its sum and spirit. For there you will see that the trade and commerce of this kingdom are objects too 'great and important' for an Irish parliament to deliberate on, till the general tranquillity is restored, and England can assist her, in the deliberation, by her parliament and army! But you will see, at the same time, that it would be very proper to give serious attention to the Protestant Charter Schools and the Linen Manufacture; the regulation of these being wise, necessary, and above all, domestic:—they relate not, it is acknowledged, to your dearest interests, but, to compensate for this defect, they 'will not impede your efforts,' (as an attention to 'great and important objects' might do), by calling down upon your heads the injured omnipotence of England.

Such, my countrymen, is the marrow of this elaborate and truly ministerial production ! I should have passed it over, as I would do all productions that are intended to have as little meaning as possible, lest the meaning they have should be discovered to be a bad one. But amidst its labored inconsistency, and in the conduct of its official supporters, there appears so much of the genuine spirit of English tyranny, of a tyranny that relents not at our loyalty or our poverty, and pays a measured deference to our spirit, that I thought I could not chuse a more proper introduction to my proposed letter on the independence of Ireland.

A sensible, and, I believe, a very honest member of the English Parliament, (Sir Cecil Wray) after giving a description of our manners and situation, concludes with telling us, that "he has little hopes of our ruin being prevented."

A late most able and spirited writer observes, that "the constitution is now reduced to a state in which NO PUBLIC BENEFIT can be obtained but by the collective body of the people." If this cannot be doubted, the question is only concerning the mode and object of the interposition.

If any public benefit can be obtained, or if our ruin can be prevented, it must, I think, be by one of these three measures:—By a union with England ; by associations to consume our own manufactures, and to learn the use of arms ; or by throwing off all dependence upon the people and parliament of England, disclaiming all political connection with the latter but through our common Sovereign, and protecting for the future our separate rights as Irishmen and as men. These ultimately resolve themselves into the following question, "Is independence worth contending for?" If any thing short of independence will prevent our ruin, or obtain such a public benefit as should content the collective body of the people, to aim at independence would be either villainy or madness. I shall therefore consider each of these measures separately, and

with perfect freedom. If the laws allow not such freedom, they must be sensible of their own weakness, and we should be equally so. To tolerate such laws is to solicit their farther corruption. If, in Ireland, and in the opinion of Irishmen, it is become treason to our Sovereign, to add to his dignity by making his People free, I have lost all idea of loyalty, and as I have lived a traitor, a traitor I must die. If it is at present, in Ireland, and in the opinion of Irishmen, a public crime to think too well of one's country, it will soon be scarcely possible to commit a crime in this country. Ireland will soon have neither government nor men !

The late Mr. Hume, in one of his political essays, I think, has said of Ireland, that "it is an enslaved nation, the individuals of which are free." If the individuals of a nation are free under the government, they must be very unreasonable individuals if they are not content ; for the government is nothing to them but as it procures them this freedom. But I will not scruple to affirm, that the observation is a contradiction in terms, and one of those contradictions, which are but too apt to mislead the inattentive, and to be abused by the designing. The individuals of Ireland compose the nation of Ireland. The nation is enslaved ; yet the individuals that compose it, are perfectly free !

A body is composed of parts or particles ; the whole has a certain quality (of slavery) yet not a single particle of that body has a portion of that quality ! This seems mightily philosophic ; and yet Hume was a materialist ! I do not think, however, that he believed in an infallible church composed of fallible individuals ! That Ireland is enslaved, few who know its situation can doubt ; but to those who do, the course of the subject will furnish proofs but too incontestable.—Her people then, as individuals, cannot be free.

As to the English constitution itself, (that boasted model of perfection and incorruptibility !) its modern history will, to

most people, I believe, appear stricture sufficient.—If perfect, it could not have been corrupted. If it did not admit mal-administration, it could not have been so ill-administered.

The prophecy of Montesquieu is already fulfilled. The legislative power of England is become more corrupt than the executive. Through that corruption the executive commands the legislative, and in effect they are one ;—this is nearly the destruction of despotism ! yet I allow that even forms are sometimes material—The Grand Seignior may take off the head of his subject—“but he cannot force him to drink wine !” Could he do every thing, his power would be intolerable. An English King cannot tax his subjects without the consent of their representatives, who must at the same time tax themselves, nor can he take away the life of a single individual unless convicted by his Peers. But he can induce the Representative to untie the purse of the nation, and he may unsheathe the sword of war, which may involve the half of his subjects in ruin, and expose the other half to the invading sword of the enemy.

When Sir William Blackstone, after a formidable enumeration of the real powers of the King, through influence, the standing army, and the perpetual revenue, tells his countrymen, almost in so many words, that their chief dependence is on the personal character of their King. It is not entirely a compliment paid by the courtier ; it is a truth extorted from the lawyer, and which the courtier would palliate.

If such be the government of England, what must we say of that of Ireland?—Montesquieu doubts whether a slave be capable of a single virtue. What then must be the virtue of a nation that is enslaved ? Honor may support the individual, but the abjection of a nation is infamy indeed ! When this abjection is once established, a virtuous, independent and spirited individual is, if I may be allowed the expression, one of the miracles of nature ! Corruption in a dependent nation is the

very malignity of corruption. In passing through a multitude, and through the servants of servants, instead of being filtered, it acquires successive contamination.

In this kingdom the power of chusing Representatives in Parliament, the only public and constitutional exertion of liberty in which the people are allowed to bear a part, is under English government, reduced to this:—It is the liberty of chusing the men who shall betray us, or act as mourners to the ceremony. It is a gloomy picture, my countrymen, if that can be called a picture which is almost all a shade. In drawing it I have felt as variously as the man who retraces the character of a friend of whom the world thought meanly, because misfortune, that exposed his vices, cast a shade over his virtues. The days of your misfortunes, my countrymen, have been out-numbered by the insults you have suffered!

But a change is at hand! “Every man will bring you a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold.—Your latter end will be more blessed than your beginning!”

But how may those things be? By a Union—by Associations—or by independence? I feel the whole weight of the subject, and it is the consciousness that I am so far not unworthy of it, that urges me to undertake a question under which I should otherwise despair.

The author of the letter to the people of Ireland, which I lately mentioned, has on the subject of a Union thrown into a very few pages what might furnish an ordinary writer with matter for a volume; a few of them I shall repeat, since it is difficult to add to them. I may, perhaps, endeavour to illustrate some of them, and to this purpose I hope the observations just made, will somewhat contribute.—

The first leading and comprehensive observation upon a union, one indeed that makes all others appear unnecessary, is that by it we lose our own legislative assembly, and take the readiest means of destroying the only one that shall re-

main of the empire. Already, God knows, there is little occasion to add to the corruption of the British Parliament! Yet what must we expect if we pour into it such another "uniform and potent body of corruption" as has flowed from Scotch Representatives!

We have now some slender ties upon the fears, at least, of our Parliament. We should then have none. Our present Absentees, "men as dependent on the Minister, as they are independent of the people," are not likely to be more incorruptible than the deputies of Scotland. "Upon the ruins of (what remains to us of) national consequence and public sentiment, we should have a few individuals, insignificant in England, engrossing the powers of Ireland, jobbing away her interest, never residing with her people, and, of course, ignorant of her condition, and unawed by her resentment."

That no representation could essentially serve Ireland, may be collected from this; that her number of deputies being necessarily small, in proportion to those of England, even if not corrupted, they would be overpowered in every question between the two nations.

The tyranny which England now indulges against Ireland, contrary to every principle of the constitution, she would then display in apparent conformity to it. Even a union could not make her feel for Ireland as she does for her own most insignificant village.

We are by nature her rival, and, in some respects, I may even say, her superior. Our quota, or proportion, of taxes must be fixed. Can any man then be so bigoted to the idea that political generosity exists, and exists in England, as to suppose she would encourage her rival much beyond what would enable her to pay that quota of taxes? But, allowing England to be generous to us, at present, must she not soon hate us with as much cordiality, and as much justice, as she now does Scotland? The conduct of the nation and her repre-

representatives would justify it.—Nations will not return good for evil, however usual that may be with individuals! In this situation, is there a noble scheme in agitation for the improvement of manufactures, the opening of communications between different parts of this kingdom, the convenience or extension of trade—is an island canal to be cut, a colliery to be promoted, a quay, a mole, or dock to be built—is it wished to improve or put in a state of defence any of those harbors which open to the world, and have capacity to receive it,—immediately a host of petitions are opposed, or the Minister is threatened with an insurrection, perhaps raised by himself. The scheme drops; or it is procured by means the most disgraceful or most ruinous. Jobbing is seldom gratuitous. Compliments must be returned. The empire suffers. They suffer who receive justice as a favor. At any rate, their spirit is destroyed, for they feel their dependence and their impotence.

When to this consideration, so sufficient in itself, we add a number of others, and none of them inconsiderable, I think there are few who will see cause for a moment's hesitation.

Such are the incumbrances England would lay upon our infant commerce, a burthen supposed too heavy for the maturity of hers; such too is the vast increase of absentee interest in her deputies to England, and their connexions; in our nobility, and all others possessed of large landed property; in the votaries of pleasure, who now spend part of the year in Dublin, but would then follow the legislature and the deity to London; while our manufacturers must be so far unemployed, agriculture, so intimately connected with manufacturers, must suffer; the tenantry must groan under rack rents and agents. Such, in consequence of the proceeding, would be the ruin of *Dublin*, without any very essential or comparative advantage to the other parts of this kingdom, all of which would be proportionally deserted, unemployed, or injured—such as remitting of the revenues to England, with the supernumerary ex-

pences, making a great part of revenue ; with a land-tax an entirely new one, and inseparable from an union, and all the other indefinite and ruinous payments ; so that Ireland would be a country consisting of merchants, lawyers, revenue officers and peasants, annually remitting to England the produce of trade, land and revenue.

We come now to consider the effects of ASSOCIATIONS ; and here, though I should allow the writer so often quoted, that all the advantages he expects, or all the nation has a right to demand, would accrue from them, if rigidly adhered to, yet I cannot help thinking that the Associations themselves will shortly melt away, unless they have a farther object than merely the freedom of TRADE, or what is generally called "the defence of our island." I mean not to depreciate Associations. They were a "measure of necessity," and they are now as necessary as ever. I mean not to depreciate the merit of those friends to their country, whose generous indignation and zeal first convinced her of their necessity. If there is a spirit now in Ireland, and if that spirit is likely to continue ; if Ireland is not sunk beneath hope, it is due, under Heaven, to the spirit and abilities of those who first roused her from that sleep which seemed as the sleep of death. But I still must think that Associations are but a first step which should lead to the final one ; or, to express myself more clearly, that the object hitherto proposed by them being insufficient, that is, not aiming at the root of the disease, they will not only be unequal to its cure, but perhaps occasion a relapse that may be inveterate or mortal.

"FIRMNESS ALONE CAN SAVE US." For the opinion England entertains of our firmness, consult the Speech of the Minister. Is it not temporizing and equivocal in every sentence ? Does it not applaud and condemn, flatter and insult us in a breath ?

Look to the government of England ! Look to her government over us ! Look to our people suffering under both these ;

then tell me who can, that while these exist our associations can be lasting.

The same radical fault in our present constitution, which rendered Associations necessary, will, while it continues, defeat them. They will be sapped as the constitution was destroyed. The same power which renders abortive all barely "internal resolutions of individuals," will gradually undermine our "written covenants;" and I do not think a single argument can be used to prove the necessity of these last, that will not demonstrate that even they will not bind, if the power of the English Parliament over this country shall continue.

In all the Associations there is a condition either expressed or necessarily implied. We associate, during the time that England shall continue her unjust, illiberal, and impolitic restrictions, &c. Were it otherwise, we should but imitate the conduct we condemn.

But who shall determine when England has ceased to be unjust, &c.? When she has taken off a sufficient number of those restrictions? When the people of Ireland ought to be content for the present, and should accept her promises for the future? Who is to determine all these points? Every individual for himself. Are the subscribers bound expressly to wait the decision and concurrence of the majority? I believe there is no instance of it, and if there were, it would be nugatory. In all voluntary associations, where there is not a power established to keep men to them, (which power, though formed upon the freest principles, must, to be effectual, be in a degree arbitrary), the Associators will judge how far the majority itself, whom they bound themselves to obey, adhered to the primitive intention of the Association, or what they will call the spirit of the constitution. This spirit will be what every individual conceived it to be at first, conceives it now to be, on maturer reflection, or chuses to conceive it, for motives known to himself. Some may for a while be retained in

the croud by indolence, by shame, or want of spirit ; but when once a few break through the rules, and give their reasons with plausibility and boldness, especially if the multitude feel any inconvenience from their virtue, or those who draw off, gain any advantage by their secession,—the written covenant of all degenerates into the internal resolution of each individual. How forcible that is we have heard powerfully explained ! Kings who trusted too far to an oath of allegiance, in which the condition perhaps was not expressed, but is of necessity implied, have found that they could do wrong, and their subjects redress it. If the people take not the hint, the wrong that is done they may be unable to redress.

The two ways by which we can enforce the covenant, will, I think, scarcely bear a close examination. We may “agree never to vote for, but ever against such persons as refuse to sign.” But when those who sign, may have plausible reasons for drawing off, and few can judge of their sincerity; and when those who are to judge are little more likely to be sincere than the men whose conduct they examined, and perhaps have imitated, what becomes of “the people’s balance in the (present) constitution ;” or where, especially in the beginning of the period, is the great benefit of the Octennial Bill ? Are we not again and again betrayed, and do we not again and again return our betrayers ? None want their sufficient reasons for their conduct, whatever it is ; nor do any want people to whom their reasons are sufficient. Where the GOVERNMENT is corrupt, ALL are too much alike.

The second method of enforcing the covenant will turn out as ineffectual. “We may publish the name of the draper and mercer who refuses the covenant, and persists to import, and we may agree never more to deal with him.” But drapers and mercers are of no country or party. The body of them will go with the crowd, and leave the custom of the virtuous few to the virtuous mercer ; a custom very edifying and very

profitable to both parties! Suppose, however, what is not very probable, that we shall not be flattered out of our Associations by some paltry consideration; suppose that our associations will stand the shock of authority, and the undermining of influence. Will England grant us the advantages of an Union unless we submit to the burthens? We shall probably excite her obstinacy; (for her obstinacy may be excited!) cordiality between the nations will be gradually diminished; our present government may be rendered still worse by obstruction, no scheme being on foot to improve it; the nation, uncertain of its interests, and unsteady in its wishes, will be exposed to its enemies at home and abroad; and it will either be teased into an union, attacked with advantage by foreign enemies, or driven, at a more unfavorable time, into an attempt at independence. If it appears then, that of the only three means by which the people can interpose, to prevent their ruin, a union would be almost in every view ineligible, and that the most lasting Associations, while the power of the English Parliament over this country shall continue, will be far from affording us effectual and complete relief; we are driven upon independence, as 'a measure of necessity.' The alternate is legislative INDEPENDENCE OR RUIN.

I might here, my countrymen, close the argument. It is already complete. If we can trace all our misfortunes, the destruction of our liberty and the failure of every public scheme, to the power of England and our unfortunate connection with her, we must throw off her power and abjure her connection, before we can either be free or happy.

Still, however, a few scruples may remain with some, and to enumerate a few of the advantages of legislative independence will not only show its own intrinsic value, but evince still farther its superiority to all that can proceed from the most plausible Union, and all hitherto proposed from the most effectual association.

I begin with the first and most comprehensive advantage ; that, in effect, which will give rise to every other. Instead of being allied, or inseparably united to the interests of an old empire, tottering under a decay of nature, hurried on by her vices, we should enjoy in our own renewed constitution, all the soundness, virtue and vigour of youth. That worst of all corruptions, introduced by the worst of all tyrannies, that of the corrupt Parliament of a superior and degenerate nation, would be removed. The interest of the governors and of the people, now so opposite, would be reconciled. We should be our own governors, for the nation would be free to pursue her own interest under her sovereign, who would be more free to indulge her. Public spirit would shake off the despair of centuries. Public virtue would have an object, and private virtue, the virtue of the people, would at once be the spring, the effect, and the cement of the Government.

I have endeavoured to show, that our peculiar situation, being divided internally by difference of religion, and being equally near to oppression and protection, must naturally produce a government of the very mildest form, and whose first and ruling principle must be toleration. How far this would contribute to the happiness, greatness and stability of the state, as it would afford an asylum and encouragement to arts, industry and virtue, let the former errors of France, the prudence and industry of Holland, and the great and amiable virtues of Pennsylvania, unfold and enforce unto the minds of all who have hearts to give fair play to their understandings !

A consequence of our legislative independence, and of the youth, wisdom and moderation of our government, would be our being unconcerned in the wars of any other nation, from which we reap much danger and loss, but no possible profit, no possible honor : and we should be neither tempted nor inclined to enter into any ourselves.

In every unhappy necessity of that kind, we should defend

ourselves ; we should be prepared to do so both by land and by sea, instead of being left exposed and defenceless by those who had brought us into danger, and being obliged to acknowledge as a favor the alms of our superior.

We should have a free and universal trade, unchecked by the mistaken jealousy, or real rivalry, of England. All parts of the nation would be equally attended to by a legislature that had an equal interest in all parts, and that would be native, resident, uncorrupted, and unfettered. It is here to be remarked, that from the very nature of trade, which is an exchange of the superfluities of one nation for the wants of another, England is the last country on earth with whom Ireland can trade to advantage, and Ireland is the last country upon earth whose trade alone can be an object to England. The spirit of trade is a spirit of equality. It is equally inconsistent with a spirit of monopoly or revenue. Now, the produce of England and Ireland is the same. There can be no trade between the nations that does not arise from the inferiority of industry or skill in one of them, and in trading with other nations they are rivals. The inferior nation must then be oppressed in exact proportion to her comparative advantages. Hence we may account for the freedom of Ireland under English government before trade was understood, and the labor-d discouragement which her industry has invariably received since its progress in Europe.

Trade assumed a new face in Europe, from the discovery of the passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope. This happened in the reign of Henry VII. and in his reign, through the influence of his viceroy, Sir Edward Poynings, Ireland gave up her independence by giving up the proposing of laws, which, in every free government, belongs to the people. They who give up one important right will see others usurped. Ireland then submitted to the trammels of England, and, as might be expected, she has not only worn them ever

since, but they have been regularly and unconstitutionally increased.

The justice of England ended where her interest commenced. Her injustice will end but with her power.

From the independence of Ireland, which will afford an object, scope, and field for arts, industry and genius, we shall not only secure the residence of our great men, who will find that residence both agreeable and necessary to their interest, but we shall acquire that name of which we are not barely deprived, but which heightens the insolence and insults of our tyrants. England now shines with light borrowed from her satellite.

"There is a spirit in man as well as an understanding!" They are equally inspired by the Almighty; and he who suffers his spirit to degenerate, as much as if he allowed his understanding to be corrupted, dishonors his Creator by his disfiguring his image.

Has the Almighty stamped folly upon the forehead, or written coward upon the heart of an Irishman? Is he an ass, that he should crouch under every burden? or a stone, that he should be insensible to insult? Are Englishmen gods, that we should worship them? Shines there a glory round them, before which the face of an Irishman should be hid?

Seldom, my countrymen, (and never in the seat of our slavery) have we met them upon equal terms; but when we did, I trust we have not been disgraced! Our unhappy exiles, victims to her policy, have proved that there is a day of retribution, of which the wisest are not aware. They have proved that those may avenge their country whom their country has proscribed, or whom the policy of its tyrants has rendered it unable to support.

If they themselves think us inferior to them as men, whence is it that they restrain our industry, by the usurpation of their parliament? And whence is it that our industry has some-

times overcome all restraints? Whence is it that they deceived us into an inequitable exchange of a manufacture in which we excelled, for one of which we were totally ignorant; and when we acquired superiority in the new one, robbed us of the poor produce of that inequitable bargain?

Whence is it that they thought they must suffer from our freedom, and robbed us of *MAGNA CHARTA*, the common gift of nature, confirmed to us by our King? Whence is it that they support their usurpations by violating every principle of the constitution, trying us twice for the same offence, and depriving us of trial "by our country and our peers?" Whence is it that they think our industry can thrive under every restraint, and that they not only load us with pensions to their hirelings, but hand us over to the plunder of their needy Lords, and despicable adventurers? When all these questions are answered, I will ask another:—By what tie of gratitude or honor, are we bound to remain subject to the people of England?

Yes, my countrymen, we owe them all the gratitude which injuries and insults can inspire! They know our force, and their art has been exhausted to make us appear contemptible both to others and to ourselves.

Are we not chronicled in all English 'Abstracts of the times,' as blunderers and blockheads? Do we ever appear upon their stage but to divert their mightinesses, by absurdity, and to tickle their hot vanity by self-complacent comparison? Have we courage? It is the courage of a brute. Sense? It is the slightly half-considering sense of a madman. Generosity or feeling? They are untinctured or unrestrained by a single principle of morality.

The *Gentleman*, that character which marks the man, and which is stamped with the uniform and universal currency of ages and of nations—that character has never yet been attributed to an Irishman! Meanness submits to the imputation.

Good-humor keeps up the jest. Its authors, however, are half-disposed to believe it (they have too much reason in our poverty of spirit!) and the etiquette of the stage and of jocularities is as established and as absolute as the court of a Viceroy. Those who have not dignity at home must expect contempt abroad. Ye who have travelled, say, which of you had the courage to announce yourselves as Irishmen!

But, we need not be surprised at the insults received by those whose passiveness seems to court them. Other nations meet the same fate from English justice and generosity. They allow not gallantry to a foe; and for *rival* they have scarce in their language another name than that of *natural enemy*. Let us appeal to the same brief chronicle—the stage of each country. We shall there see, that if the French sometimes throw into an English character a few oddities and eccentricities, if they make him extravagant, or *outré*, in his love of liberty and contempt of authority, they still give him the superior qualities that command the admiration of the understanding and the enthusiasm of the heart. The English never introduce a Frenchman, but to flatter the spleen of their pride, to entertain their galleries, or to heighten the brutal prejudices of their mob. They ornament his mind with every thing that is ludicrous in vanity, mean in cowardice, and truckling in avarice; and on his person and dress they exhaust caricature. The French give the English all the firmness, spirit, and dignity of the man. The English confer upon the French all the meanness, mischief and mimicry of a monkey.

If then, my countrymen, we have the feelings of men, and will not be insulted as slaves, if we aim at having a rank, a character, a name in the world, let us re-assume them in the face of the world! Who are they that shall oppose us? Is it our sovereign? It cannot be! He knows his interest; he remembers that we are loyal; he remembers that we also are his people. Is it the people or the parliament of England? They

dare not.—The prophecies of those generous individuals, who cried out against the excesses of the nation, will at length have gained some credit by their completion. If they should not—but I cannot make a supposition that would be absurd and unnatural !

Shall we sacrifice our own great interests, the great interests of posterity, the first-born, the gifted, of every age, of every art, of every science, at the altar of that idol, England? Shall we aim at an unmerited, an unprofitable, a ruinous generosity,—or shall we, by taking care of ourselves at present, make it possible for us one day to be generous to others—even to her who never was just to us? Shall we continue the slaves of a sinking nation, and, as such, infected to the very heart with her vices, but incapable of her virtues,—or shall we, by one nobler effort, throw off the dead weight upon our virtue and happiness, and encourage every seed of greatness, which so long has lain unvegetating under a load of fertility, or which every wind has wafted to the soil of our oppressors? Could we, by joining England in her struggle with misfortune, prolong her hour of liberty and virtue, the world might gain by a friendship which no nation ever yet has exhibited, and we should be justified. But her fulness of time is come. We cannot prevent her sinking. Shall we allow her to grasp us in her dying convulsion, and pull us with her to the bottom? When her very breath is pestilence, her touch is death, shall we, with the absurdity of a Turk, refuse to change her atmosphere for a purer, and cling to disease and to corruption, as if folly were virtue, presumption piety? We shall not, my countrymen! Our eyes are opened, our spirit is risen, and our representatives have caught a portion of the flame! They no longer can be satisfied with ‘temporizing expedients!’ They will strike at the root of the disease; not attempting to skin and film the ulcerous part, will they leave the nation still a prey to the rankness of corruption! Their

opportunity is glorious, and their prudence will embrace it! They will not leave the People to consider their own dignity, nor lay up for themselves the vain and mortifying regret, of being unable to govern those whom they wanted spirit to lead.

Tarquin, having murdered the father and brother of the first Brutus, took him into his care, and, in kindness to his inoffensive simplicity, or in pity to his folly, seized for his use, the lands and revenues of his family. Brutus was the standing jest of the Court. Boys, dunces, dotards, aimed their dull pointless shafts at him. If he allowed him a retort, its finesse gave surprize, but excited no suspicion. It was the bolt of a fool shot by accident. He repressed his indignation, and bad his mighty soul lie still: the time was yet unripe. At length accident gave the word. The dagger of Lucretia produced that effect, which poetic fancy has given to the spear of Ithuriel. The fool started into a hero! His smothered indignation burst forth like a torrent. The tyrants had scarce time to be amazed. They were swept from their seats; and a nation of slaves became a nation of heroes!



LETTERS OF ORELLANA.

THE Letters of OWEN ROE O'NIAL prepared the mind of Ireland for the discussion of the great question of Parliamentary Reform—they struck at the root of Irish misfortune, and spoke in a language to which both Government and People had been strangers. The constitution of 1782 was a great achievement; but without reform it was obvious, *that* constitution was but a *name*. The Irish Protestants, however, who had the spirit to assert the freedom of trade and the freedom of constitution, had not the liberality or the common sense to

make their Catholic countrymen full participaters in the liberty they obtained. They erected the temple of their freedom on a narrow and contracted base, and it was not to be wondered that the corrupt breath of the minister should have hurled it from so flimsy a foundation. Even the great Henry Flood, who was the most powerful parliamentary debater in favor of Reform, could never be induced to admit his Catholic countrymen into the bosom of the constitution.—The consequence was, that the common enemy despised a deluded people, and the Minister rose on the ruins of the Reformers.

The Letters of ORELLANA, which we are now about to give, contributed, in an eminent degree, to the illumination of the national mind on the question of Reform. They came from the pen of Doctor DRENNAN—a name which, as Edmund Burke said of another great man, makes the country that gave it birth illustrious in every other on the globe—

Clarum et nobile nomen, et multum nostræ quod proderat urbi.

Dr. DRENNAN still lives to enjoy the confidence and respect of the people he has so long labored for; and his political works will be hereafter referred to as the true measure of political virtue—the pure constitutional theory, which, though not acted upon to the full extent of its author's wishes, imperceptibly succeeds in restraining that licentiousness and corruption which it cannot entirely destroy.

LETTER I.

FELLOW-SLAVES!

A SHORT time will discover whether the people of Ireland be the most magnanimous, or the meanest of mankind. Personal character is not established in a few years. It requires still longer time to estimate with precision the character of a nation; little as yet has been seen of Ireland as a *public*; and all that has been seen may have proceeded from a childish

caprice, which sometimes deviates into right, as well as from the durable stability of manly principle. The love of ornament, a passion common to the savage and to the courtier, the force of sympathy which kindles so quickly, and communicates so rapidly through the warm and light texture of youthful minds; a boyish fondness for the semblance of war, the applause of gaping multitudes, the benedictions of the aged, and the flatteries of the fair, the natural love of order, the hope of command, and the influence of fashion—may have produced a transient political phenomenon, called, Volunteers of Ireland. Indeed, they made a mighty pretty show, and poor Ireland, whose chief pride had been the white shirt that covered, and scarcely covered her nakedness, looked wondrous well in her red cloth and her gold lace. Her story is a short one. About six years ago, the honest gentlewoman awoke from a trance, dressed herself by way of frolic in regimentals, entered as a volunteer into the English service to supply the place of the invalids that were sent to guard our coasts, marched up the Mons Sacer of Dungannon, marched down again, became a strolling player, went to ‘enact Brutus in the Capitol,’ totally forgot her part, threw off her warlike attire, and sunk down again—a wretched woman.

Let not this nation yet dare to call itself patriotic; there is scarcely a nation on the face of the earth which at certain periods has not burst into general notice, and illumined the historic page with a gleam of glory; but this glory quickly passed away, and the brand, which perhaps had filled the world with its flames, still sunk, like a taper in the socket; even Corsica has twinkled in the Mediterranean. There must be a certain time, and that not a short one, in which the constant agency of public spirit shall have produced an habitual determination of the public will to the public good, powerful enough even to influence the manners and morals of a people, before that people should be dignified with the style and title

of patriotic ; good passions form good principles, but to produce this effect, their operations must be lasting as well as vigorous.

The man who addresses you is a slave ! As his condition is such, he feels himself inclined to bless his God, that he is sensible of that condition. The bondage must be felt before the chain can be broken. I call that servitude beyond the power of redemption, where a callous body is united to a senseless mind, and where man is transformed into a well-trained biped, that grows fat in the interval of blows. I am not ashamed to express the acute sensation which I have of my condition as a slave, because I consider it in the light of an auspicious signal from the hand of heaven, that I am still capable of freedom. I prostrate myself before that Being, in whose eyes every slave must be an idolater, and over whose rights every tyrant must be an usurper, beseeching him to pierce the hearts of my dear countrymen with the same sharp sense of their condition that I have of my own.—I rise up, and feel myself a man !

Every nation under the sun must be placed in one of two conditions. It must be free, or enslaved. I make no scruple of affirming that there is no medium between those two situations, and if we are deceived into the belief that there is such an intermediate state, it is by mistaking the prudent moderation of tyrants, the mildness of modern manners, or the gentle but powerful influence of religion for public liberty ; or, a still more fatal error, for sufficient security in the enjoyment of that liberty.—Our own wills, or, which ought to be the same thing, the will of our representatives, either possess an adequate share in the supreme legislative power, or it does not. If it does not, we are slaves. We are so. Call yourselves, countrymen, by your true title. It is that fallacious and empty title, of freemen and fellow-citizens, which cheats you into the belief that substance is connected with the

sound. Friends and fellow-citizens, is the address used by the Venetian Aristocracy to the simple populace; and when the edict came from Caprea, Tiberius did not hesitate to call the senate which registered it, Romans. Your boyhood and your youth were led astray by false associations, and blinded by the refined delusion of history: you claimed relationship with the Saxon Alfred, who established juries, crushed corruption, and laid the foundation of the English Constitution: with Hampden, who had a head to contrive, a heart to conceive, and a hand to execute; and Sydney, who shook the scaffold with his undaunted tread, was, to be sure, one of your great progenitors! 'Tis all the fairy-tale of infancy. You are all native Irish, under the controul of an English pale, and every rotten borough in the kingdom is nothing more or less than a feudal castle, and the collection of these petty sovereignties is nothing more or less than despotism.

I know no idea which has been productive of more harm than one which took its rise from the speculations of some fanciful foreigners, that there was something of super-human excellence in the frame and contexture of what is called our political constitution. National partiality, or more properly national bigotry, has adopted this idea with enthusiasm, and superstitiously adhered to it. The same sanctified veil of mystery has been thrown over civil and religious matters; and the same timidity in questioning the supposed perfection of this complex sort of being, called king, lords, and commons, has bound down its votaries into a sort of political bondage unworthy of freemen, and men of free thought. The alliance between church and state has preserved and sanctified the abuses of both; and the same dogmatical spirit, which established for all future generations a certain system of religious belief, has transferred to our civil constitution an equal authority over the minds of men; the same reluctance to examine the grounds of our political faith, and the measures of

submission to what has a century or two for its support. Error is as ancient as truth, and the world is as yet too young in political experience to repose upon any plan of government with unbounded confidence. If there be a progression in the arts and attainments of mankind, occasioned by the discoveries of one age being added to the acquisitions of the past, and if the science of politics, one of the most important, be not excluded from the same advantage, I should imagine that alteration, provided it springs from public opinion, not from personal caprice, has a greater chance of reforming than of deforming government. When the perfection of our constitution is brought as a reason to conclude that it ought to be IMMORTAL, I consider the persons who make use of this argument as covering themselves with a fig-leaf, in order to hide their indolence, their timidity or their corruption. 'As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,' is the sum and substance of their political creed.

I have called you slaves, and you are so in every acceptance of the term, except in having a capability of being free-men. Whether that capability be improved into the energy of independence, or whether it will only serve to accumulate disgrace upon your dastardly souls, two little months will determine. The freedom of your present mutilated constitution is only to be found in the Utopia of a fanciful Frenchman, or the political reveries of a Genevan philosopher. By those wretched multitudes I swear, who wander with their fellow-brutes through the fertile pasturage of the south, by those miserable emigrants who are now ploughing a bleak and boisterous ocean—the democratic spirit of the constitution is no more!

Hear me for my cause!—I speak only seeing that all is silent.—I speak, because the warmest wish that swells this breast is the welfare of my country. I speak with a feeble voice, but could I add the voice of millions to my own, with

the deep-toned energy of thunder, I would cry aloud to the slumbering virtue of the land—*Awake, arise ; for if you sleep you die !*

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LETTER II.

FELLOW-SLAVES !

FROM my inmost soul do I detest that sort of inquisitive indolence, so common at present in this country, which is perpetually asking the pestering question, What news? What news? The question comes from a character made up of a boy's curiosity, a girl's timidity, and a dotard's garrulity. If you be men, to whom I address myself, make news. There is a certain querulous disposition of mind, which calls for time, place, and circumstance, to give it distinction: the enterprising spirit makes the occasion it desires, and turns every occurrence to its own advantage. It is particularly in times of popular commotion, that every man may give what the artists call relief and elevation to his character, he feels the force of his soul, and rises above the element he lives in. Even I, little known, and where known unnoticed, triumph in the secret closet of my heart, over those abler writers who are silent in such a spirit-stirring season.—“ A poor little soldier had been the standing jest of his military companions. In the day of battle, a battery suddenly opened on the corps to which he belonged ; grenadiers and all, in a panic, fell prostrate on the ground, while the little fellow stood erect as his God had made him, and looking down with a smile of contempt upon the fallen heroes, cried, Which of us is tallest now ?”

Constitutional rights are those rights respecting life, liberty and property, without which we cannot be free ; and an assemblage of those rights, I call free constitution. Every art and science has its fundamental axioms, which, by their intrinsic evidence become worthy of universal acceptance ;

which if not expressed, are always understood in every deduction of reasoning, and to which, in all dubious cases, there must be made a last appeal. The science of politics, not less demonstrative than others, has its first principles and self-evident truths, which are axioms in their nature, the source from whence all reasoning must spring, and distinguished by the name of Constitutional Rights.—It is upon the solid basis of these rights that every system and plan of free government, however various in form, must be erected. Those that rest their liberties upon certain imaginary checks in the machine of state, are more conversant in the constitution of a clock than that of a commonwealth; and it is a credulous reliance on the operative virtue of these complex contrivances, which too often lulls the interposing power of the people into fancied security. This is to sleep under the shadow of a pile, where, to speak like a political mechanic, the centre of gravity falls without the base. The only efficient check salutary to the nation, is the check which the governed keep on the governors; and if this check does not operate, the form of free government may remain, but the soul that animates it is lost for ever. Let not any high-spirited and magnanimous nation rely upon the fortuitous collision of three discordant estates, whose accidental opposition of private interests may, perchance, promote the public good, and may as probably counteract it. Away with the liberty that hangs pendulating upon a perchance! An equal balance of monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical power, on one common quiescent centre of gravity, is hard to be conceived in theory and has never been realized in experience. If government be constituted for the good of individuals, the balance of power must dip into their scale, and the people will then, as they do now, enjoy a virtual constitution which has no virtue in it. Thus the only solid piles on which the fabric of freedom remains unshaken, are constitutional rights, enforced by the con-

trouling energy and momentum of that mighty mass to which those rights belong—"spiritus intus alit, totamque agit mollem."

From those rights, the laws in every free country ought to flow, as the streams of life from the heart of man; plainly indicating in every branch of their progress, the source from which they derive virtue and energy, and in their remotest deviations always capable of being traced back to the fountain of vitality. As the propositions of Euclid are deduced from the self-evident axioms prefixed to the work, the laws in a free country are so many political theorems or problems derived from a ground of certainty equally incontrovertible—the rights of human nature. These first principles of free government are by no means numerous, but their value, on this very account, becomes inestimable. On two commands hang all the law and the prophets; and the principles of policy are not perhaps more numerous or more complex than those of religion. If one axiom be questioned, mathematical science drops to the ground: if one constitutional right be usurped, our security in the rest becomes precarious.

If I be asked to name one of these constitutional rights, I cover my face with my hand, and I mention the right of being taxed by ourselves, or by our representatives in parliament; without the absolute enjoyment of which prerogative, what is the distance between an Irishman and a Freeman? Not less than three thousand miles. Until you obtain the practical enjoyment of this primary, necessary, self-evident, incontrovertible right, you can have no constitution, and your just title, compliment yourselves as you please, is slaves. If indeed it can satisfy your puny ambition, you may embrace the theory of a constitution, just as Ixion embraced the painted cloud, while the goddess herself eluded the grasp, and mocked the impotent mortal. A Frenchman may have the same enjoyment in Montesquieu, and a Genevan in De Lolme.



I call your attention to another quality necessarily inherent in rights of constitution—their incommunicability. These fundamental privileges respecting life and liberty are incommunicable, and government is instituted to enforce these rights in us, not to exercise them themselves. Liberty can remain liberty only while it is its own protector; the moment it resigns those primary rights into the hands of others, all that remains is nominal and delusive. If you trust the shield, you may present the bearer with the spear. Freemen cannot, while freemen, delegate to parliament the use and possession of any one fundamental right or franchise, for if they do, by what right can it be reclaimed?—If, therefore, any one constitutional right be notoriously infringed upon, the existence of the rest being in the certain prospect of destruction, they must, on the moment, be all called into action; and they can be brought instantly to our assistance, for, being in their nature incapable of transference of delegation, they stay within call. Their residence is the HOME OF A COURAGEOUS HEART.

Now the infringement of that constitutional right of representation being so manifest, the majesty of the people may, on the emergency of the moment, without deigning to ask leave from delegated power, exercise the constitutional right of assembling together, and agitating the most effectual and practicable means of redress. I may not be lawyer enough to speak in the refined subtlety of that dangerous profession, with respect to the strict legality of conventional meetings: but if I be asked whether such meetings be not contrary to law, I should answer, impossible, for they coincide with the spirit, genius, and principles of free constitution. Must I always have a little pettifogging lawyer at my elbow to advise with in such cases as these? Blessed be God, whose finger has engraven them on the human heart, the principles of free government are plain, perspicuous, palpable, easily under-

stood by the illiterate, and fit to be inscribed on the horn-book of infancy. Shame upon the man who is not as well acquainted with the first principles on which free government is founded, as the Attorney-General or any other Attorney in this kingdom!

Some constitutional rights are expressed by the law, others which may not be expressed are understood; for, being antecedent to the laws, they are supposed, and taken for granted. Such is the right of meeting in popular assemblies, and such also is the right of addressing legislature for redress of grievances. Even an allowance that such assemblies are unprecedented does not make them illegal. They may be their own precedent, and justify themselves. They are not contrary to law, because they may not be according to law. The law does not intend such meetings, because it is not their nature to take cognizance of any measures which may in the least innovate on the present established form of government; no governments, except those in America, provide for their own reformation, by the institution of a censorial power, which at certain periods shall become the saviour of the constitution and the restorative of the state. Were recourse to be had only to measures, according to the strict and rigorous letter of law, no reform could be attained to all eternity; as little as a watch with its main-spring broken, could by its own agency regain the power of telling time.

To what power, then, is an injured people to appeal?—to the genius, the sacred and venerable genius of the constitution. Methinks I see his awful figure, habited like a slave, and in majestic ruin, sitting like the Danite of old, between the two pillars that support the building; brooding over his imperishable strength, and suffering it for a time to furnish sport for aristocratical arrogance.

The object, then, of constitutional meetings, is constitutional, and the meeting itself must therefore be constitutional.

Let it, at the same time, be constantly remembered, what this object is. It is to reform. It is not, therefore, to subvert, much less to introduce that anarchy among the people, which must overturn all government. As little is it the object to create any new form of government, much less to invest any one estate of the legislature with an arbitrary power of creating this new form, a power which, if abused, must end in the complete destruction of the very essence and substance of liberty. The object is to reform, and in the means employed for its attainment, we must avoid anarchy on the one hand, and despotism on the other.

When the Sheriff refuses to call a county-meeting, it is universally allowed, that the freeholders have an inherent right of summoning themselves into convention. What is true when predicated of a single county, must surely be true of two, of four, of a whole province, of four provinces—the kingdom. All the difference is, that the *posse regni*, a high and mighty word, stands in place of the *posse comitatus*; And it exercises a right similar to that of a single county, with regard to its representatives, in instructing the grand representative of the nation.

As long, therefore, as the H. C. by their rejection of the principle of reform, disables itself from all free and fair discussion of the subject, it becomes the business of the people who first formed that house to deliberate on the means of reforming it; and if in the natural and necessary progression of this great and good work, county-meetings should swell into provincial, and these again coalesce into one great national assembly, this assembly ought to be considered in no other light than as a constitutional, and at the same time peaceable means of expressing, with energy and effect, the conjunct will of a loyal people—whose cause is good; whose numbers are great; and whose union must prove irresistible.



## LETTER III.

*FELLOW-SLAVES !*

PERSEVERE, says the venerable CHARLEMONT, while the grand climacteric, like a sharp-pointed sword, hangs dangling over his head ; persevere, my dear countrymen, and by patience, prudence, and the possible intervention of fortunate contingencies, we shall attain, in process of time, to the summit of our desires. In what time, my good Lord, in what time ?—for our yoke is heavy, and in a little time we shall not, as it appears, be allowed even to groan beneath the burden.—Why, (replies the hoary Chieftain) perhaps in half a century.—Alas ! are we to measure by centuries the grievances which centuries have accumulated upon us ? Is there no dauntless virtue that can snatch the gift of freedom from lingering time by glorious anticipation ? And have we no other alternative than to pray for an antediluvian existence, or, to die with the poor visionary consolation, that liberty may be the lot of our great, great grand-children ? For my own part, I must honestly confess, that I like more substantial gratification than the hope of leaning from a cloud, enjoying the prospect of happy futurity. Posterity is little to us : we are every thing to posterity ; and every individual among you, in times such as these, may be considered as an Adam, whose want of resolution, indolence, or corruption, may not only perpetuate his own servitude, but entail it on a generation yet unborn, whose first cry will be for that liberty which is their rightful inheritance.

Resolutions ! resolutions ! shall we never have done with resolutions ! Resolution, that stalks like a giant before, while the dwarf performance comes lagging behind him. The walls of the Rotunda may be papered with resolutions ; and I should like to see the character of Harlequin at a masquerade pasted

over with party-colored resolutions, and one of the most pointed serving as a sheath—to his dagger of lath. What are these resolutions? Why, they are BONDS by which you have engaged your honor, your veracity, your credit as a people; and if these engagements be forfeited, your honor, veracity and credit must be forfeited also. Let all the nations of the earth know, that the people of Ireland have, of their own accord, committed themselves on the question of reform. Who forced you to enter upon the subject? Point me out the man. Flood himself followed the People. You did not assemble like white boys in the night; you did not whisper these things in a corner: you were rather numerous to engage in a plot: your resolutions issued from the press with the sanction of signature and the stamp of publicity: they were borne on the wings of the wind to surrounding nations: they were translated in foreign prints; and the pusillanimity of the French language sunk beneath the republican hardihood of your expression. The words which have escaped your lips are irrevocable. They will be handed down in the faithful records of history, and your fame or your infamy will be notorious and immortal.

When this country bore with greater patience than at present the pressure of public misfortune, her wretchedness was productive of that kind of virtue which best suited her situation; and her government for the most part displayed the economy of indigence. The expences of the nation were regulated by its revenue, and a small surplus, which generally remained in the public purse, manifested even in its misapplication somewhat of the vigour of competence; particularly when contrasted with the distress opulence of a sister kingdom, sinking under the weight of an enormous debt, though possessed of the commerce of the world. This economical equalization of revenue and expenditure preserved in a great degree the trustees of the people from the means of corrup-

tion, which a redundance of national treasure must have easily supplied. The grievances of the country, joined to the calamities of war, became at length insupportable: the slender sustenance of a single manufacture grew precarious, and the sources of existence were dried up: a revolution necessarily took place, and Ireland obtained what has been called Free Trade and Independent Constitution; two of the greatest curses, I am free to say, that ever can befall a country, unless they be crowned, and that speedily too, with Parliamentary Reform.

For what, in the first place, must be the inevitable consequence of free-trade, even supposing that this delusive term, which merely expresses the inclination, would also denote an ability of making such trade productive? Mark the consequence. Is there one among you simple enough to believe, that the large increase of public revenue consequent upon the increase of national wealth, would be faithfully expended in the service of the State, and that all undue influence would diminish, when the all-powerful instrument of this influence was more abundantly supplied? No—assuredly no. Does not your latest experience teach you to answer no? Does not history teach you, that the enjoyment of plenty has always been converted into the most successful means of abolishing the remembrance of freedom? Does not the awful and instructive example of a sister kingdom demonstrate, that the same commerce which at one period can produce a strength in public liberty not to be borne down by the highest swell of arbitrary power, may in no long time after, create a fund for establishing an insidious system of court-influence, fatal to the dearest interests of the community? Let the man who rests the least confidence in the future incorruptibility of parliaments, constituted as at present, consider past history, the temper and manners of the times, the contagious example of a sister nation with whom we are necessarily connected, the



various modes of corruption, the dexterity of its professional agents, the singularity of persevering patriotism ; let this man add to all these the rapid accumulation of unappropriated revenue, and then lift up his head to deny that a free trade must drive us more rapidly into consummate slavery, unless the people obtain and exercise a greater power, over those whom—begging judge R's pardon—I must call the representatives of the people *de jure*, if they be not *de facto*. If a free trade be not improved, we continue as we were, insulted indeed, with a nominal independence of constitution ; and if it be improved, we are only gilding the chains with which others shall bind us.

For what, in the second place, is this boasted legislative independence ? What but a transference of arbitrary power from despotism abroad to aristocracy at home ; from an ostensible power, which did not scruple to confess what it dared to practise, to a hidden power which steals away the rights of the nation like a cut-purse, and when challenged, shrinks again into the mass of the common multitude ; from a power which must have dwindled away in the progress of national improvement, to a power which grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength, in health enlarging like a wen, in sickness exhausting like a drain ; a power not moderated by distance, but which lives among you, rankles in the heart of the landlord, lies in wait at your doors, lifts the latch and turns out the wretched inmate, or forces him to sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage, makes the necessaries of life the instruments of oppression or vengeance, and poisons every manly sentiment of the soul in the first germ of existence.

Better, better, I say, a thousand times, had it been for this land, had it still remained under the supremacy of Britain, if you be resolved to rest in your present condition. The aristocracy of Ireland and the despotism of Britain, counteracted each other, and the opposition of their private interests was

often productive of the public good. The people stood in the situation of arbiter in the dispute, preserved a sort of balance of power, and by being always made the ostensible motive of contention, sometimes were the chief gainers in the contest. When the oligarchy talked high and haughtily at the castle, the executive power became patriotic, in order to show, that by courting popularity the machine of state might move on without their assistance; and when government stood out in the bargain, the grand pensionaries ranged themselves on the side of the people; the mercenaries of state threw up their commissions, and went a volunteering in the service of the commonweal. The pensioned slave, that used to cower behind the benches, came forward and rolled his eyes and beat his breast; and the pack-ass of successive administrations has sometimes rejected his provender, and miraculously brayed out an eulogium upon liberty. Thus popular acts were often passed from the mere spirit of party, and perhaps this country had not brow-beat England so successfully, had not the aristocracy of the land supported the voices of the million—— and for what purpose? not to promote the power of the people, but to strengthen their own: our government was indeed a strange incongruous mass of Irish aristocracy and English usurpations oddly huddled together, but still safer for the people; than when one of those hostile powers sits sole sovereign, holding the sceptre of supremacy in its hand, and treading the rights of the people beneath its feet.

The fact in short is, the people of Ireland may trade in order to raise money sufficient for an aristocracy to purchase that corruption which secures their own authority; and you must labor with the sweat of your brows, like the Egyptians of old, to raise a pyramid in which the majesty of your king, and the splendor of his crown, must be buried for ever. If you be resolved to do nothing more in the question of reform, meet, I beseech you, for one purpose. Meet in order to appoint an

embassy who may prostrate themselves before the insulted majesty of the British parliament, and petition to be once more sheltered by their abdicated omnipotence. Let the prayer of your petition be like the groans of the Britons to the Consul Ætius—"We were driven," you may say, "from foreign usurpation to domestic tyranny. We are now driven back again, and in our choice of evil, we wish to be swallowed in the depths of despotism rather than suffer the slow poison administered by our own countrymen. Forgive our apostasy—we abjure every doubt entertained of your infallibility, and all we ask is to die in the *euthanasia* of absolute monarchy."

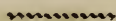
My country ! my country ! My heart sinks within me—my eyes grow womanish when I think of thy situation.

Long and sorely oppressed by the left-handed policy of a sister kingdom, laboring under every corruption in thy domestic government, deprived of all internal police, plundered by rapacious landholders, deserted by thy wealthiest citizens, overlooked by a British senate, ridiculed by thy own, despised by thy K—, and abandoned in despair by thy children !

Yet still amidst these evils, I feel a melancholy pleasure in pronouncing, that your most serious consideration will lead you to deduce the grievances of this country from perhaps a single cause. A trade confined by general regulation, or local suspension, injured the interest ; a legislature, unwilling to assert its own exclusive jurisdiction, wounded the honor of the nation. A custom (for the evil rested rather on usage than law) of introducing or recognizing as members of government, bodies of men unknown to the constitution, or official partizans of prerogative, was a great grievance. A standing army supported by the people, yet independent of the people, was a measure pregnant with ruin. These excrescences lopped off, the root still remains. The hydra of national calamity has many heads, but only one heart. While that heart remains, you may lop off every head as it springs,



but others will rise in its place. This great political evil engenders and nourishes the rest. Why entangle your understandings with researches into the musty records of antiquity? Why perplex yourselves with the professional subtlety of the law? Here is the origin of evil—you hear of it abroad—you see it at your doors—the people are lost, if they do not at present speak, and write, and act with all the energy which the spirit of the constitution warrants. It is not the temporizing expedient of repealing this or that law, or removing this or that minister, which can yield substantial and enduring redress to the ills of the nation; and if I be asked, who are the agents powerful enough to effectuate the work of reform? I lay my hand upon my heart and I answer, Yourselves. God forbid, that while the constitution warrants peaceable, yet efficacious means of redress, any Irishman should countenance the vindication of our rights by the doubtful and dreadful decision of the sword: but it is the duty of an Irishman to remark, that if any people from irresolution, want of integrity, criminal neutrality, or causeless despair, should neglect to employ those means which all the laws that are left them have placed in their power, that people is not entitled to lament the loss of liberty, which it deserves to lose.



#### LETTER IV.

##### FELLOW-SLAVES!

ANSWER me one question.—If you be languid in the pursuit of reform, would you not be equally so in the enjoyment of it? Are you ABLE to be free? Be assured, that if it be laborious to attain liberty, it is laborious to maintain it. The spirit of a nation able to be free, must be a haughty and magnanimous spirit, strenuous, vigilant, vindictive, always

impatient, often impetuous, sometimes inexorable. There is a spirit in man. There is a spirit in nations ; and the inspiration of the Almighty gives some nations understanding to know the value of freedom, ardor to pursue it through surrounding difficulties, and energy to maintain it. The reform, if obtained at this instant, might only serve to accumulate disgrace upon your heads, and make you a laughing-stock to Europe.

I fear your present indolence and irresolution : they hang about my heart with a melancholy foreboding and prescience that you are too impotent to possess a reform, that you have not, as it were, the nerves and muscles to bear it. If, at this time, you do not exert yourselves in a manner worthy of the sublime object which you have in view, I pray to Almighty God, that, whatever may be the lot of posterity, you yourselves may never obtain a reformed constitution. Did the concession of the ministry at this moment present the nation with a reform bill in a gold box, I should accept it, as an Irishman, with a reluctance bordering upon disgust ; when I reflected that my countrymen might only divert themselves for a little with the blessing, as children with a toy. I declare I should be sorry that any minister brought about the redemption of a nation that ought to redeem itself ; and, if it does not redeem itself, is not worthy of redemption.

Must a mighty nation stand gaping for the wind which blows them the news of one man going into a closet, and another man coming out ? Must the genius of the Irish constitution stand, like a blind harper, at the door of a man in office, till the porter bids him go about his business ?

Perhaps this young minister knows you, my countrymen, better than you know yourselves. His experience in human nature, and the history of the world will lead him to remark, that there is a distinction of rank among nations as well as among individuals ; and that although some states rise by their

own efforts far above the vulgar level of what may be called the mob of nations, appearing to the world as if the overbearing and impracticable spirit of his mighty Father had been melted down and diffused through the land; yet, the generality of men, in different states, are sufficiently happy if they be permitted to eat, to drink, to sleep, and to propagate. He might observe, that these seem to have been the only objects of national ambition in this island for centuries past, and that when the strange lunacy of the moment is over, they will continue our only goods for centuries to come. He may assure us, that his principles and his wishes would lead him to gratify the good people of Ireland in all their reasonable desires, but that he knows not as yet whether the expression of these desires be not merely the fugitive productions of the day, born only to buzz for a few hours, and then to perish in the stream of oblivion.—That we were at present in a state of probation for freedom: that Providence, which often chuses to throw obstacles in the way of a nation situated as ours is at present, merely as trials of its strength and resolution to bear what it has boldness enough to demand, may have designed to use himself and his associates as instruments in his hands, external obstacles, which may prove whether the nation has permanent efficiency within itself sufficient to entitle it to the rank of a free people. That on this account solely, from the purest concern for the interests of humanity, which must be materially injured by our inability to maintain, with any credit to ourselves, the great object of our desires, and with silent and secret wishes, that by a heroism becoming candidates for such a prize, we may approve ourselves to our King and to our God worthy of a reform; he takes the resolution to act, as a prime minister always acts, and hopes at the same time, that your admiration of his abilities, will not lead you so far as to make you forget the use of your own.



I think, my countrymen, that the attainment of national freedom ought always to be made in a progressive manner, in order to train a people as it were to manhood: but I think, at the same time, that this progression ought to move on with a velocity accelerated in proportion as the nation approaches the object which attracts it. The youngest among you will easily remember the different steps in this progress, from laying the first stone at Dungannon, until the meeting of the last Convention: but the oldest among you is too apt to forget the indissoluble connexion between those steps and the mutual support which they give to each other—I might dwell with pleasure on the regular and beautiful gradation of persevering virtue, which has of late raised this country to a name among nations; but I wish rather to appeal to your memory, for it is too soon, I hope, to commence your historian. Let the man who is fatigued in the ascent, look back and pretend to admire the prospect—I wish only that you may recollect how every part of this business has been, as it were, cemented with what went before, and to what came after. I wish to caution you from resting the weight and magnitude of this mighty matter upon any single occurrence, but that taking the whole under one comprehensive view, you may be less disappointed in the failure of any one part, and rest with perfect confidence, that if you do not desert yourselves, you will soon behold the completion of the work. I should wish particularly to impress you with the belief, that this assembly of delegates is nothing more or less than a continuation of the convention which assembled in the year eighty-three; and that as the object of the nation continues the same; as the agents who are interested in the attainment of this object are the same; as the motives become every day more pressing; and as the means put into practice are the same constitutional means, strengthened by repetition and variation of form and character, the same eagerness should spread from breast to

Breast, to make that assembly which is about to meet, an illustrious proof that the majesty of the people has hitherto put forth only half its strength.

The convention in 1783 assembled as volunteers, with no design of relinquishing, for a moment, the name of citizen, but from a desire of adding constitutional energy to that sacred title, by uniting the characters of citizen and soldier, cementing them together in one common and consistent appellation. When these guardians of domestic peace, these protectors of your liberties and lives, were opprobriously used, they observed a majestic and expressive silence, a silence that spoke feelingly to the hearts of the people, and said, "We armed in your defence; we placed this nation in a guarded silence, dreadful to its foes. We have been the life-guards of the constitution, and richly have we been paid by your—applause. Let us dissolve; we appeal to the people of Ireland to justify our characters, vindicate our cause, and restore our fame." You, then, my countrymen, are now called upon for your verdict in this momentous cause. Your silence is a contrite confession, that all which has been done was rebellion; that every volunteer is an outlaw, and every county-meeting a conventicle. The father may then call his son an assassin, and the son may call his father a traitor. The whole nation must in this case be acknowledged a nest of private and public iniquity. Speak, then, if you do not chuse to have the reputation and fair fame of your friends and kindred destroyed before your eyes. Speak, if you do not wish to be employed as mutes to strangle your children with a bow-string. Yes! I speak warmly, because I am deeply interested. I glory in being enthusiastic. I pity the man who can discuss such a question as a problem in mathematics, and when he triumphs in his argument, walks off convinced and contented. This nation will never obtain its object, till it joins the ardor of love to the composure of political philosophy. I therefore

call upon my countrymen, by every serious and solemn adjuration, to rivet in their memories all that has been done already in the pursuit of a parliamentary reform, and to connect it closely to, and strongly with, the present moment.

The Arch of Liberty is nearly finished: one stone hangs upon another. Each supports, and is supported. The key-stone is just ready to be put in—without it, all must give way. The abandonment of the present Civil Convention is the abandonment of reform.

I will suppose—what may Heaven avert—that the business of reform is suspended for a time.—What follows?—the whole work must be begun anew. Every man who has stretched himself by the fire-side, must be again called forth and goaded into action. County meetings must be summoned—committees appointed—provincial assemblies convened, and after a length of time, there is a possibility that the nation may recover the same vantage-ground which it possesses at this moment. I say, a possibility, for the probability is, that the present opportunity lost, will never be regained; and that a month or two may ruin what a life-time will not be able to restore. The reason is, that we act at present with the collected power of every Dungannon meeting, of every other provincial assembly, of the late convention, of 50,000 Volunteers, of the wisest and best men in both kingdoms, all condensed into the golden now; which must therefore invest the delegates of present appointment with a potency formed from the combination of all these preceding authorities, with its own.

It is only by viewing the origin and progression of the different means employed for accomplishing a reform, that we can overlook any blunders which have been made in the work. I consider the aggregate meeting of Dublin as a coarse stone in the arch which juts out a little from the rest, but which, notwithstanding, filled up a vacancy when a bet-



ter was not to be had, and prevented that interruption and suspension in the undertaking, which might have been attended with the most dangerous consequences. Why was there such a vacancy? Ask yourselves! Why did the dregs of democracy rise to the surface?—Ask those rich, respectable, honorable gentlemen, why they, who came in so late, went out so early, and did not finish the work which they did not begin?

It is not the aggregate meeting who are to be blamed for voluntarily exposing themselves between you and the enemy, at a time when you did not think proper to act yourselves; but it was your own reproach, that you did not come forward to fill that station which they occupied with so much more zeal than ability. It is really curious to see how much petty political scandal has been cast upon those poor men, by a set of people employed in the character of gossips, to whisper away reputations, and blast with their baleful breath the most innocent and inoffensive characters; I could at this instant set some of those pestilential parts of human society in the pillory of the press, to furnish sport for the grinning multitude; but while satire lifts up her sharp and shining weapon, she disdains the prostrate foe, and draws it back again dry.

It is not the persons who propose, but the thing proposed that ought to claim the attention of a people obliged, as we are, to use various means, some more dignified than others, in the promotion of our great national good. It is not the name which ought to alarm us, but the subject-matter which ought to animate and excite us. I must allow that the letters C.O.N.G.R.E.S.S., are magic letters of themselves sufficient to rise an apparition before the eyes of a guilty minister,—an apparition that will seem to draw his curtains in the dead of night, and rouse him from his pillow; but surely, surely, there cannot be a more modest assemblage of letters than those which compose the word Convention. The aggregate of Dub-

lin were indeed ill able, for a moment, to sustain the weight of this important business. Your cause, countrymen, loses nothing by the acknowledgment ; but if you do not treat their successors with adequate respect, you have lost your all. For who is it that now summon you into convention ? Not the aggregate surely ! You are called upon by the choicest of your countrymen !—relations !—and friends ! You are adjured by a regard to your own consistency ; by all the hopes you entertain of the future prosperity of your country ! by your ancestors and by your posterity ! by the characters of liberty, and by the genius of the constitution !

———They adjure you in the name of the best and wisest characters in both kingdoms ; in the name of those illustrious citizens of the world, who throughout Europe are sending up to Heaven the devout aspirations of the heart for your success ; by the blood which has been lavished through the annals of your history in the assertion of liberty ; by the soul of the immortal Locke ; by the spirit of reform, which dictated the terms of the revolution ; by that glorious innovation on the customary rules of succession, which placed the crowns of three kingdoms on the head of a German elector,—they adjure you to move on with indissoluble firmness, irresistible union, and heroic ardor, to the final accomplishment of your glorious purpose, by concentrating and condensing the will of a whole people into one great assembly.

To you, young men, I must address myself with warmth and with emphasis. The spirit of reform, like the spirit of youth, must be active, ardent, progressive, impassioned, enterprising, enthusiastic. Advanced age is of a heavy, inactive, procrastinating disposition, which always acts on the defensive, and wishes, like the veteran Fabius, to conquer *by delay*. Such a disposition might serve to maintain liberty, but will never acquire it. The genius of reform must be attended with a certain gallantry of soul which pushes forward

in the field of virtuous glory. It is this gallantry of soul, like the white plume on the helmet of Henry the Fourth of France, always seen in motion among the thickest of the enemy—which will inspire those who follow with confidence, and those who oppose you with despair. As years advance, men are apt to acquire a habit of accommodation to external circumstances, however humiliating; the noble powers of nature decay for want of use; the beggarly passions usurp and engross the heart, until at length such persons begin to think it a matter of necessity that they should shift merely for themselves, and leave their country to become the foot-ball of fortune. The love of country and mankind warms and dilates the youthful breast. Those expansive passions gradually contract their limits during the progress of life. They shrink into the petty squabbling of a petty party; and at length all that poor patriotism can do, is to issue out in the evening twilight, bluster a while at a club or a coffee-house, and then sneak again into the contracted circle of *self*. You are not yet benumbed with the trembling caution and commercial selfishness of the aged. This corrupted part of the globe has not yet contaminated the native honesty of your hearts. Your unadulterated spirit has all the raciness of generous and genuine growth, and tastes of the flavor of the soil. Dear and gallant souls! I wish to name you man by man! I know many among you, and I wish to embrace you all in a holy brotherhood of affection. I wish to join my hands with yours, and to swear at the altar of the constitution, that by that Being whom we adore, we will never abandon our country. Look! I think I see your parent country standing, like a Spartan mother, at your side, hiding the tear that trembles in her eye, and indignantly pointing to the ruins of a constitution which her virtuous sons alone can restore to its original grandeur. Let your past actions rise before your eyes like the shades of your ancestors, and summon you to consistency.



Let what you have done only serve to usher in and announce what you are to do. Think of those whom you are opposing and tremble, lest you suffer yourselves to be defeated by officers of the revenue ; by excise-gatherers ; by collectors, agents, attorneys, starving expectants, placemen and pensioners. When Cambyses of Persia warred against Egypt, he placed a number of cats and dogs in the front of his army, and the simple Egyptians sacrificed the honor of their country, rather than injure the object of their superstition. If there be a pulse of life remaining in your breasts, in the same instant that you throw this paper out of your hands, go and devote yourselves for a little hour to the service of your dear and native land. Go, call your friends together. Draw up a requisition for the convention of the county in which you live. Subscribe it ; send it to the press ;—GO, and *be free*.

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#### LETTER V.

##### FELLOW-SLAVES,

THE man who just a moment before, beheld the last agonies of a departed friend, and heard his groan of expiration, is sometimes seen to maintain with all the violence of passion that he is not yet dead. The survivor hangs over the poor breathless body, and thinks, or affects to think, that there is still an ear to hear, an eye to see, and a tongue to speak. But as soon as the cold hand drops down like lead, and the light of life sinks for ever from the eyes ; when the human face divine becomes scarcely distinguishable in form or feature, and all hastens to the first stage of corruption, the same man strives in vain to overcome an instinctive disgust, quits the once loved but now loathsome object, resigns it to earth, and all that remains behind is—remembrance. I watch my dearest country at this moment with the same anxious solicitude.

I say within myself, is it possible she can be dead? Is it possible that all the fine feelings of human nature, all the patriotic fervor which *so short time ago* circulated, like the invigorating blood of life, through the remotest extremities of the land, can be frozen up in a moment? Can this sensible warm motion sink so suddenly into cold oblivion: Can the dilated spirit of the nation degenerate into a kneaded clod? Are these the hands which but yesterday drew the sword half out of the scabbard, and dazzled our eyes with the shining weapons of war? No. She is not dead. I swear she is not. 'Tis only a death-like swoon. The pulse will again play; the cheeks will glow; the breath of life will be felt, and the spirit will return. Tell me not I am deceived. If I be so, 'tis a glorious deception, and I wish to indulge it.

But what can be the cause of this sudden and surprising suspension in every vital power; for the knowledge of the cause is essential to the cure. No apparent alteration in the system of affairs has taken place to stupify, to divert, or to deceive. The transitory representatives of majesty have indeed shifted with more than usual celerity from shore to shore, but without impressing the public mind with much distinction of character or peculiarity of conduct. The last one always seems to hold a glass in which are seen the shades of his yet harmless successors, who wait on the farther side for their allotted time to dazzle our metropolis for some months with the glare of mimic majesty, and then to enter again their former station as humble satellites of the throne. The gentlemen who undertake to keep the ruins of the constitution in repair, fill up their different official departments with their accustomed fidelity, and aristocracy no longer affecting disguise, stalks like a Colossus over the land seeking whom it may devour, and furious for its prey. I do not think there is any radical defect in the heart of Irishmen, which is the cause of this wonderful stoppage in the circulation of public spirit,

nor do I think there is such a derangement in your understanding as not to comprehend the perils of your present situation. The necessity of a reform is grown into a text which precedes your writings. It is the axiom of your argument ; it is the proverb of conversation. It twines itself round your present and future welfare. It excites your ambition. It gratifies your love of glory and independence. It agitates and interests the noblest passions of your nature. What then, again I ask, can be the cause of this surprizing calm ? What evil power or passion has chained your tongues and fixed your eyes so stedfastly upon the ground ; muddled your clear intelligence, and changed the very shape of your souls ? Good God ! is it possible it can be RELIGION ? Religion, that descended from Heaven to enlighten and enlarge the human mind, to melt down the ruggedness of barbarism into the unsuspicious intercourse, the sweet amenity of civil life ; and in place of those grim and horrid deities who delighted in the sanguine field, in the cries of the captive, and in human sacrifices, to set before our eyes HIM, the meek and merciful, who wept over Jerusalem.

When the author of that religion you all profess was told that his mother and brethren were coming to seek for him, he stretched forth his hand to the multitude which surrounded him, a multitude composed of Jews, Gentiles and Samaritans, and cried aloud, Lo ! my mother ! my sister ! my brother ! I call upon you, people of Ireland, in the name of Him, the Great Philanthropist,—of him who in the torments of crucifixion sighed out his last breath for the welfare of his enemies,—I call upon you, Churchmen, Presbyterians, and Catholics, to embrace each other in the mild spirit of christianity, and to unite as a sacred compact in the cause of your sinking country.—For you are ALL IRISHMEN—you are nurtured by the same maternal earth. The hand of Heaven has broken off this island from the continent, as if to preserve at least one



*fragment free*, and has made it your common habitation. That same hand has scooped out your capacious harbors, deepened your ports, and sheltered them from the storms. It has chained down the hurricane, lest it should ravage the land. It has commanded the power which shakes the earth, and terrifies its guilty inhabitants, to be still. It has stifled the raging volcano, and forbids the dreadful visitation of the pestilence. The gentle dews of Heaven drop fatness on your fields, and not even one venomous animal ventures to contaminate their verdure. Dare not to abuse the gifts of God, and show that it is your *religion* to be FREE.—Dare not to continue in the blasphemy of servitude.

Is this a place, or is this a time, to blow the coals of persecution and awaken the discord of sects? Is this a time when the enemy has forced open the gates, when they are within the walls, when they have penetrated into the innermost and most sacred recesses, torn down the awful veil, and placed their sacrilegious hands on the very ARK which consecrates our constitution, and makes it famous throughout the globe? Is this a time to stir up civil turmoils, and to pour the poison of long-forgotten antipathies into the ears of the credulous? Is this a time to summon up those dreadful ideas which had impressed themselves on our minds when children, and of consequence became associated with the first principles of education, to make these spectres ascend in gloomy resurrection before our eyes, and make us children again? Is this a time for learned and venerable missionaries to run through the land preaching a *crusade*, when all should write, speak and act against the enemy at our doors? Have we not suffered enough already by an aristocracy of power to subject ourselves in this enlightened age, to the worst of aristocracies, an aristocracy of opinion? Is not this the time to display our zeal in politics, and our moderation in religion? Is not this the time to lull the agitation and beginning ferment of ecclesiastical discord

with the balm of oblivion, before it sinks into the melancholy malignity of revenge, or is exalted into that raging phrenzy which tears down with convulsive strength every bolt and bar that opposes it, and then roams at large in all the wildness of desperation? Is not every demon who wishes to blast the fairest prospect of human happiness, grinning at this instant with infernal glee, when he sees that we are ourselves destroying the fruits of six years labor, and setting our luxuriant harvest in a blaze without his assistance?—Oh! let me conjure those among the different descriptions of religion, whether of the Established Church, of the Presbyterian or Catholic persuasion, who know the imperfection of all human institutions—let me conjure them, at this most trying hour, to form one grand association, one great fund of virtue, good sense and patriotism which may yet sustain our tottering credit as a people; and rescue from the jaws of ruin our almost bankrupt reputation.—There is, in each of these classes of Christians, a select few, who have one common object in contemplation, but who are kept apart from each other by the doubts and jealousies of their forefathers, which are, as it were, ingrafted into their sweet and generous natures. When once out of the sphere of attraction, a repulsion takes place; this soon becomes aversion, and that as soon degenerates into all the rancor of sectaries. Asperity of conversation generates constraint in behavior, and makes them blind to that philanthropy which all of them may in different degrees possess, and which ought to be the bond and cement of their union. Jealousies, when once revived, run like wildfire through the lower ranks of the community, as nothing is so inflammable as the tinder of religion; and thus their heads and hearts are diverted from every, even the most favorite object. It is then doubly incumbent upon those in all persuasions who are too tenacious of their liberty to be drawn into the vortex of a sect, to form a social compact, which may yet reclaim the wandering eyes of

the multitude, dissipate their causeless fears, and fix their attention solely upon REFORM. Blessed be the man who in times such as these, falls like the affectionate Joseph on the neck of his brethren, however different in character or situation, and kisses them, and weeps aloud, and says,—I AM THY BROTHER.

Such men, alas! are few in most descriptions of religion, and to this few, I must address myself, for their junction will give them the strength of many. The multitude, in every religion, have strong antipathies. Such antipathies are natural, and I will venture to say, useful. They arise from a strong predilection to the principles of their own persuasion, without which men are apt to grow indifferent to religion at all. They give mankind extraordinary firmness of spirit upon trying emergencies, and they are accompanied with that severity in practice and strictness of conduct, which generally flow from strength of conviction and rigor of doctrine. This stiff and uncompliant cast of character is sometimes apt to grow sharp, acrimonious, cruel and ferocious. Then is the time for men whose hearts are distended with the godlike feelings of philanthropy, to cast themselves between those sects that seem even to threaten hostility; then is the time to dispel the mists from the eyes of their infatuated countrymen, and to let them see their enemies lying in close ambuscade, while you,—yes, I say *you*—are murdering in dreadful mistake your harmless friends, and fighting for your bitterest foes. The great misfortune of the Catholic religion in this country arises from this circumstance, that there is little or no distinction of rank among its professors, and of consequence few men of weight and estimation to sweeten that leaven of intolerance and persecution, which in other persuasions is not perhaps less in quantity, but is well tempered by numbers in the middle and superior ranks of life; who gently instil into the minds of those beneath them, the milk of human nature.



It is chiefly on this account\* that the Catholics at this day

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\* It should not be a subject of great wonder to the reader of this volume, that the Author of ORELLANA should have held such opinions with regard to his Catholic countrymen in the year 1784.—For a long series of years the victims of a heartless and debasing oppression, their understandings were subdued to a most unaccountable patience of the injuries they endured.—Is the eye of the slave able to bear the meridian blaze of Freedom, or might he not, in the language of CURRAN, be inclined to *break his chains on the heads of his oppressors*? On this principle, the author of ORELLANA might have correctly supposed, that the mind of the Catholic required the aid of political discussion to prepare him for the enjoyment of political power. From 1778, (the year when the Irish Catholic first raised his head from the floor of his cell, that year when the first gleamings of Liberty were allowed to pass through the bars of his prison) to 1793, the political discussions by which Ireland was distinguished were constant, interesting and informing. The Catholics threw off the chains of religious as well as political bigotry, and made themselves worthy of the confidence of their more fortunate Protestant fellow-countrymen. It was therefore in the year 1794 we find the Author of ORELLANA, under the signature of a Bæotian, bearing testimony to the progress of the Catholic mind, to its full capability of the enjoyment of political power, and to its UNDOUBTED RIGHT to a participation in the blessings of the British Constitution,—

“The circumstances of the times, as well as persons, have changed in the very manner wished for, and the mind must change along with them.—To commercial interest, a middle and mediating rank has rapidly grown up in the Catholic community, and produced that enlargement of mind, that energy of character, and that self-dependence which men acquire whose interests do not hang at the mercy of this or that individual, but on general and necessary consumption. Will any person assert that such men are not as well qualified to exercise civil franchise as the most of our 40s. Protestant freeholders, whose corruption is in reality occasioned by the unjust partition of political power, and who are tempted to convert their monopoly into money, because its partial distribution has given it an artificial value much beyond what nature and reason allow it. The unjust detention of liberty from others, operates as a curse and a blast upon those who have hoarded the common good.

are absolutely *incapable* of making a good use of political li-  
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It rots in their possession. It corrupts when not partaken; and he who has more than his exact share of freedom, becomes in one situation of life a tyrant, and in another, degenerates and putrifies into a slave. It is the judgment of God on all nations and all men who presume to appropriate his gifts, and to make of right a privilege or a prerogative. The Catholic mind has cast off its *feudality*, and that person would in truth be inconsistent who kept prejudice as it were at nurse, when by nearer approach and closer acquaintance, he finds in that body a nationality of sentiment, and a fidelity in engagement, demanding respect and admiration; while he knows it to be his general duty, as it is his dear delight, to foster the spirit of freedom, wherever it may be found, especially in the breasts of his countrymen.

“It is in reality the civil incapacity which has made and must continue the moral incapacity. It is the will to be free, which makes the capability, and the first sigh that the heart sends forth for liberty is a sufficient indication of potency to enjoy it. To affect a wish for their ability to possess freedom, while you continue the penal code which makes them incapable, is cruel mockery. A capacity for freedom is as natural to man as a capacity to eat or to drink; it is an instinct of nature, not a consequence of education. Man is often indeed the creature of habit, and he may learn to be a slave, as he may learn to drink alcohol and to eat *asafœtida*, but you will never break him of these bad customs by degrees; it is only by giving a complete wrench of the mind to an opposite direction. The doctrine of natural rights is plain, simple, commonsensical; and the practical enjoyment of them requires no tuition, nor any course of adoption. Rights most unjustly have been converted into favors derived from the gratuitous lenity of government, and are now to be purchased as a license; when it was solely for their plenary enjoyment that men entered into civil society.—Magna Charta need not be taught like the Principia of Newton, and the rights of personal security, personal freedom, private property, the right of defending them, and of electing a trustee to watch over and protect them from undefined privilege or unlimited prerogative, require neither literature to feel their value, nor any reach of mind to exercise them with judgment and prudence. In a state of nature we should know them well, and government has too often been only a means and an art to render and keep us ignorant of fundamental rights and of our primary duties.

berty, or what is the same thing, of political power. I speak the sentiments of the most enlightened among them, and I assert it as a fact, that the most able men in that body are too wise to wish for a complete extension of civil franchises to those of their own persuasion; and the reason is, because they well know that it must require the process of time to enlarge their minds and meliorate their hearts into a capability of enjoying the blessing of freedom. If your best friends doubt whether you yourselves be capable of enjoying a reform, the most liberal among the Catholics must know the greater insufficiency of their brethren,—and hence their silence upon the subject. Their acquiescence in what has been said and done in their favor, proceeded only from that secret wish for liberty so natural to the human heart; but their tacit acquiescence evinces a mixture of desire and dread proceeding from a consciousness that they were not able to be free. I assert it as a fact, that the leading men among the Catholics did not *begin* to agitate this unhappy question. It was forced upon them by men whose goodness of intention is the best excuse they can make for their want of fore-knowledge; and who have unconsciously supplied the enemies of reform with the means of warding off the otherwise irresistible impulse of public opinion. Let then every man among you know, that the Catholics have withdrawn their claim of civil franchise, and that they do it because the business of reform must be retarded rather than promoted by their interference. I rejoice that there is not the shadow of excuse left for your indolence or inattention. I rejoice that I am now writing a sentence which will manifest to him who is yet unborn, that the success or failure of reform is to be your proper and peculiar glory, or your everlasting condemnation. May this sentence live, when the hand that writes it is mouldering in the dust, to tell wondering posterity that after the Catholics had withdrawn every claim on the justice or generosity of their country, for



the welfare of their Protestant brethren, the Protestants themselves, abandoned without the shadow of a cause, the glorious object just within their grasp; became exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fallen, and then sunk into the grave tormented by the agonizing reflexion of what might have been done, and haunted by the ghost of their departed grandeur.

The question of reform is therefore to be considered merely as a political question, and he—I care not who he be—that intermixes aught of religion in the matter, is from ignorance, from simplicity, or from design—an enemy to his country. The question is not, whether a reform, attended by an equal participation of civil rights with the Catholics, is better or worse than to continue without a reform;—I may answer, worse, if I chuse to wander from the question, which is simply and solely this,—whether the government of Ireland is to continue an oligarchy, or to become a limited monarchy: whether a few men are to return the legislative, and chain the executive beneath their feet, or are the people to rescue the rights of the Crown from pollution, and to vindicate their own. The Catholics, I again repeat it with exultation, have declined all share of the contest; and conscious that the plurality among them are placed, as it were, in an earlier stage of society than the rest of the island, they submit in silence to the necessity of situation and circumstance—waiting with patience until time has given them maturity of strength, and ability equal to the arduous object they wish to attain. I do not think it at all surprizing that an enlightened Catholic, on seeing his Protestant brother almost certain of possessing a reform, should exclaim with Esau, “Is there not one blessing left? Bless me, even me also, O my country!” but when that same man considers calmly his situation, he resigns himself to the sentence of fate, and *for a time* is content to serve his brother. May that time be made a short one by their own laudable exertions? May the light of true science illuminate

their minds and soften their hearts ! May the gradual diffusion of property, while it engrafts their affections upon the soil which supports them, communicate at the same time a spirit to maintain what their industry has acquired ; give them self-estimation, conscious dignity, and in short that republicanism of soul which will announce to the world that the people who possess it are stamped by the hand of Heaven, heirs of independence !

A reform in parliament, dear countrymen, is not merely the removal of an evil. It must prove a never failing fund of positive and substantial blessings, which, with respect to Protestants would be immediate, and to Catholics, eventual. The public mind, by being frequently brought into action, must grow better informed ; the latent powers and energies of every individual that enjoyed the blessing, would be brought into action ; for there is sympathy between all the noble principles of our nature. The heat of public spirit would foster and bring into the light of day those seeds of science, which at present germinate but to die in the breasts of indolent and unambitious men. The republic of letters, a name sacred in the mouths of every free people, a name pronounced with reverence in the courts of kings, would arise to illuminate the land. The mines of labor would be opened, and the mists of superstition would dissolve away. The fanaticism of sects would become an enthusiasm for civil freedom. We would all live like Christians, and behave as countrymen. The Catholic soothed by favors, by the conveniences of life, and by the hopes of affluence, would gradually melt into the citizen ; the Presbyterian would acknowledge that all sects when in possession of power have abused it : and the Churchman would find a nobler foundation for the security of the church than—the abuses of the constitution. The laws would inspect our actions, while our thoughts were left to God.

O Thou, who hast showered down on this fair and fertile

island so many gifts of thy kind providence, dispose the hearts of ALL its inhabitants to improve the blessings of nature, by crowning them with liberty, the richest possession and brightest ornament of humanity. We ask for those rights from others which we received at our birth from Thee, who made our bodies erect and our souls immortal, rational, and divine; let us not be surprized at this hour with the stroke of death, and return into thy presence stripped and despoiled of those precious gifts which were the glory of our natures. At a time like this, it is very terrible to die. If we cannot live like men, we indeed deserve to die like slaves—but spare us—good God! spare us for a little, that we may yet have an opportunity to vindicate the human character; and call our spirits to thyself in that glorious moment, when our cause is victorious, and our country FREE. LET ME LIVE TO SEE THAT DAY, AND I SHALL EXPIRE WITHOUT A GROAN.

O'RELLANA.

#### TO THE PUBLIC.

THE present great national question has divided you into four distinct classes. The *first* is composed of those who may be called *sedentary* reformers. These are amiable but indolent characters, who yawn over the interesting argument, and woo their object with a sort of Platonic passion, which is sufficiently gratified with hope, and is never very anxious for enjoyment. These men in higher life are generally made use of as *toasts* to fill up among well-bred company the vacancies of an after-dinner conversation. Their names move regularly round the peaceful orbit of the table, without scorching a single guest with the meteor glare of enthusiastic patriotism; shedding only that serene and inoffensive light, which neither warms with its heat, nor dazzles with its effulgence. It is a-



bliging, however, in these gentlemen, to lend the use even of their names to the community. They serve the same purpose as the paste-board effigies of heroes, which used to cheat the eyes of the ignorant populace, and eke out the procession of a Roman triumph. These are the men among you who are always too modest to lead, too proud to follow, too wise to debate, too prudent to decide, too busy to be active, too young to resolve—or—too old to perform. These are the men, in lower stations, who, after convincing the conviction of their neighbour, sit quietly down with the sure and certain hope, that the full-fed commissioner and meagre levee-hunter will come and lay both possessions and promises at their feet.

A second class is composed of *practical* and *efficient* reformers—who reduce philanthropy into action, join the animation of passion to the confidence of conviction, and with the wish to persuade, have also the power to propagate the principles they profess. There is one character among this number, who moves along like a comet, portending nothing but blood, fixing the gaze of the multitude, and perplexing monarchs with the fear of revolutions. Yet his course is determined, notwithstanding his apparent eccentricity. It is the rapidity of accelerated motion which increases his resplendence, and his magnitude augments as he approaches more nearly to the great and glorious object which attracts him.

In the third class are the *anti-reformers*, a compact and well regulated body, who ground their obstinacy in argument on the incontrovertible axioms of *post*, *place*, *pension*, and *expectancy*; and who act most stoutly on the defensive, as men may be naturally supposed to do, who fight for their fortunes, and perhaps for their lives. These are the men who set such value on the ruins of our constitution, that they denounce vengeance on the sacrilegious hands which would remove even the dust and rubbish from the sacred walls. These are they who conjure up the horrid images of civil war, massacres, pes-

tilence, and famine, to scare our women and our boys. These are they who are always sure to compliment their adversaries in argument with the title of restless spirits, desperadoes, innovators, and incendiaries. I remember I once took the liberty of expressing my surprise to a gentleman of this class during the time of dinner, that he would admit such things as potatoes to his table, which were known to support the lowest dregs of the people, and were indeed neither more nor less than a *republican root*.

The fourth class may go under the name of *neutrals*, a strange miscellaneous assemblage from all ranks and conditions of life. These characters, like the skin of theameleon, take the colour of those objects which happen to surround them; and their actions, whenever they do act, are seldom uniform or decisive. This well-peopled class keep at present a sort of balance of power between the opposite parties. They are sought after as proselytes, and derive the first importance in the minds of both sides by possessing a perfect indifference to either. These men are generally carried away as feathers on the prevailing tide of popular opinion; and it becomes, on this account, most incumbent on every strenuous advocate for reform, to act at the present moment in that decided manner, and to speak with that determined tone, which may fix the irresolute, and inspire the timid with confidence.

If the active partizans seem for one instant to stagger, the panic will fly like lightning, and all the *non-effectives*, who at present range themselves on the popular side and fill up the intervals, will desert in a body to the enemy. The *sedentary* reformers will sit still and look on, while we who remain will be forced to walk under a yoke made of those very arms which we bore as volunteers and soldiers of the constitution. Such will be the inevitable consequence of procrastination, or of what has been lately disguised under the term *perseverance*. It is not the part of an experienced general to expose his main-body,

by the loss of his auxiliaries; and the fact is, that unless we support them, they will abandon us. Nor will the curse of inaction rest here! Cowardice spreads by the same sympathy as courage. The most forward will feel their spirits damped by the contagion of bad example. The breath of corruption will then blow like the spirit-sinking Sirocco across the land. The sternest patriot will feel himself emasculated, and the sinewy strength of manly integrity will relax into the weakness of the woman.

It is then the bounden duty of every real friend of reform, at this important hour, to impel the *neutrals* forward, by shewing in themselves a resolution, spirit, and constancy, which is never damped by despondence; and to stimulate those of the first class into some degree of exertion, by flattery and popular honours. For this purpose you must appear to give credit to every able and needy adventurer who languishes for the title of patriot. It is the seeming credulity of the public which tempts many to the profession of patriotism; and the number that "strut and fret their hour upon this stage," compensates in a great measure for the want of perseverance in the individuals. The inflexible patriot of *to-day* is stimulated into some act that may approve him worthy of the title, and is succeeded to-morrow by another obstinate Cato, who generously contributes his mite to the stock of public good; which by this means accumulates more by the number than the intrinsic value of such petty donations. Popular opinion may be said to establish a sort of insurance-office for the virtue of men, and this office supports itself by the multitude of small adventurers notwithstanding the notorious fragility of the *material insured*. Were the glorious title of patriot to be wrung from the reluctant hand of the public, by a long and laborious apprenticeship in the service of the common-weal, scarcely a man, except a Flood, would put in for the prize; but when the splendid appellation is distributed with little selection, every one is eager



to become an adventurer in this lottery, certain of an eventual fortune, because *one* man had the good luck of gaining 50,000*l*.

I do not go willingly out of my way to mention that man. The laborer is worth his hire, and the spirit of a great nation ought to be above chaffering about *wages*. I believe him to be great even with his wages; but his best friends would have thought him greater without it; and he has gratified the malignity of his worst enemies, by sinking so much nearer the common level of humanity. If it be ever necessary to barter glory for gain, he deserved triple the sum he received. If such conduct must be rewarded with *money*, let millions be the inadequate reward; but even with the reward he has obtained from a country, comparatively speaking, as poor as he once was himself, this man can never stand up in his place with the dignity of crest which well became him as the first creditor of *the nation*. His vivid genius, his eloquence and literary merit, must give him reason to rank with any Roman of the Augustan age; but in the earlier periods of that Republic, the members of the senate-house possessed a sort of PROUD COMPETENCE which rendered the tone of their eloquence deep, energetic, and irresistible. I know not whether this grand pensionary of the people be corrupted, but corrupt men will flatter themselves in thinking him so; and perhaps flatter him till they make him so. In the insidious progress of self-deception, his patriotic feelings, which *at this time* ought to be aroused to action, will, *unconsciously to himself*, grow less exquisite and irritable. His present pettishness against the people, will degenerate into asperity and acrimony; these will at length terminate in disgust; and every little selfish passion will find leisure and room to unfold itself. The bird of Jove, which had grasped the thunder-bolt, and borne the lightning of Heaven, when caught and chained down in a cage, forgets its ambitious flights, and with flagging wing and lack-lustre eye, bears the

insults of every coward boy, and furnishes sport for every menial of the castle.

You are to consider a patriot in no other light than as an instrument employed by the people for a certain purpose, and when this instrument becomes rotten, another must be substituted in its stead ; but in the question of reform, which of all political questions is most purely the matter of the people, nothing can be more dangerous than to rest with assured confidence upon any set of men ; particularly upon men of shining abilities, and consequently of great ambition. In this national subject the more closely the matter comes before the nation in SELF-convention, the better will it be managed ; and the more fortunate will be its issue. When the native, genuine, homely spirit of the people is raised into local meetings—then transferred to provincial assemblies—to conventions—and to convention-committees, I always imagine that in these repeated distillations, as they may be called, something of the original taste and flavor is, perhaps indeed *necessarily* destroyed. The subject matter by all this rectification and straining, becomes, in truth, very rational and very refined ; while those who agitate it become very polite, diffident, ductile, and unassuming. The enemies of reform, on this very account, lose all their former terrors, and now pretend to make a jest of that power as a hobgoblin, which before they had dreaded as the avenging spirit of an injured people. In short it is the piercing cry of oppressed human nature, conscious of its strength and impatient of injury, which startles the stoutest champion among your enemies.

If the nation *feels* the want of a representation in parliament, it will speak as if it *had feeling* of the grievance ; and if it does not speak feelingly, the acute reasoners on the opposite side will naturally deduce it as the strongest presumption that there is no grievance felt. “We are very ready,” they may say with an ironical sneer, “to do every thing for the greatest

happiness of the greatest number ; because we pay the highest respect to the majesty of the people." It is a term which always sounds pleasant in our ears ; but we really acknowledge ourselves at a loss to know whether you be serious in your present requisitions. You looked, indeed, at Dungannon, as if you were not *making game*, and we recollect that your red coats had the same effect on us at that time, as the terrific terms of raw-head and bloody-bones had upon us when children. But our nerves are now a little better strung. We shall allow that you played the counterfeit incomparably well, and we give you full credit for the whole as a super-excellent *joke* : we therefore pardon it as a diverting piece of wagery ; for surely you cannot be so simple as to imagine that we are to quit our ancient rights and indubitable possessions for the frolicksome tricks of a *jester*, or the bravado of a *bully*—we can practise the game of *brag* as well as you.

I must say that these gentlemen have reason in their argument. I must accompany them still farther, and maintain that their concessions have always been fully adequate to your exertions, and that government has always approved itself ready to give when you had the inclination to ask. The ruling power has ever met you half-way ; and so far from being obstinate, has been wonderfully gracious and facile.—Would you have it forsake all the modesty and decorum of spotless and uncontaminated innocence, clasp you round the neck, and stifle you with embraces ?—Would you have it come, like the spiritless Queen of Sheba to Solomon, and moved by the bare report of your depth of wisdom and magnitude of power, throw shekels of fine gold and heaps of precious stones at your feet ?—No ; there is an obsequious majesty in g——t, which would be wooed, and not unsought be won. When you took up arms as Volunteers, were you not legalized by the authority of two estates of the legislature ; and was the silent acquiescence of the third aught else than the speechless rap-



ture of a happy parent, who looks with delight on his martial offspring. When you met at Dungannon, were not messengers sent to wait at your doors, and to return, on the spur of the moment, with the result of your deliberations? Did any of these men at that time enter the meeting, and with a tribunitial Veto put a stop to its proceedings? When you resolved, did not they perform? Did not expresses upon expresses stimulate the dilatory cabinet of Britain to accede to your demands; and as if it was always feared that the last express might fall sick or get drunk upon the road, did not the Secretary himself fly like a Mercury from the Council-Board, and rising in his place, beseech the British Senate to comply with your reasonable desires? Did they not comply? When you were informed that the repeal of the Declaratory Act was an insufficient tenure for legislative independence,—that the liberties of a nation were not to hang upon implication, deduction, the virtue of a negation, or the loop of expediency—but were to be secured by a record composed of characters positive, marked, and notorious; large enough to be read by the multitude, and deep enough to resist the injuries of time; that the basis of eternal agreement could not be too strong and explicit—and that repeal was merely retrospective, while renunciation like the god of Peace, had one face turned to the time past, and another that looked into futurity; did not you testify your wishes for renunciation, and did not renunciation take place? Was not your very countenance watched before the words escaped from your lips, and were not your wishes anticipated while they were yet rising from the bottom of your hearts? If you have any grievances remaining, speak, and tell what they are. Is government obliged to divine your complaints? Where then is the seat of your pain? What noble part has it affected? Is it your head or your heart? You sigh and you tremble—are you so opprest with violence of disease that it has robbed you of utterance?—Speak!—

Speak!—if there be yet a spark of life stirring within you, I conjure you in the name of God to speak, and if you cannot, hold up your hand!—SHE DIES WITHOUT A SIGN!!

Put yourselves, my countrymen, in the place of administration, and you will find that they act with the strictest propriety. You have made a new requisition through the medium of the volunteer convention. That convention, however, represented only a part of the people. In such a national matter as reform, it is the nation which ought to speak. Ministers are too patriotic to listen to a part, when the interests of the whole are concerned. They deny that the volunteers express the sense of the people, and assert, that they are a set of delegates who have usurped the right of speaking for the people without their consent, and disdaining their control: that therefore it is the duty of every Patriot to bring about the only substantial reform by driving those usurpers from the seats which they have polluted, and that they, I say the Ministry, throw themselves on the wisdom and magnanimity of the people, in the largest sense of that word, to justify their patriotic conduct at the present momentous crisis.—On the twentieth of January, 1785, will this great appeal be determined.

For my own part, I cannot speak upon this subject, as I happen to enjoy at present the office of petty constable, and I have no inclination to encounter a summary civil process, or to be found guilty of a misdemeanor, and perhaps of constructive high treason. You may speak; for I know not of any established precedent in the courts of law for issuing out a writ of attachment against—a NATION; or for citing two millions of people for contempt of court, to be condemned or acquitted by an oath of exculpation. Perhaps, indeed, every man is to be accounted a k—g's officer on the same account that he is supposed to be his tenant; and his M. may be as much lord of the souls of his subjects, as he is of the soil.

The favor of the sovereign, says the most eloquent of historians, may command power: the esteem of the people only, can command authority. Under that authority you are now called upon to act. If there be no other means of assembling in your counties than by the requisition of a sheriff; and if the sheriff does this with an attachment hanging over his head, it is not to be expected that you will find among the number a Decius who will devote himself for the good of his country. You are to act—and the volunteers of this nation are to be tried by God and by their COUNTRY.

But still, I fear for the event!—Ireland is yet a child. There is sometimes seen in rickety children an extraordinary forwardness of mental powers, which surprizes every one with its strength, acuteness, and comprehension. The nurse wonders, and the parents expect, that the little one will turn out a prodigy. Every thing seems learned by instinct and intuition. Gradually its powers weaken, its faculties shrivel up. It loses all its fiery spirit, its glowing ambition; and the little wonder of the world at length *lives* a Simpleton, and *dies* a Sot.

A PETTY CONSTABLE.

## LETTER VI.

### FELLOW-SLAVES!

THERE is a certain TERM fixed by the hand of Providence, which sets a limit to the misfortunes as well as to the prosperity of the people. This terminating period sometimes happens in a season when it was least expected, and mocks the boasted sagacity of the second-sighted politician. The cloud which he supposed must burst in ruin upon the heads of millions, silently disperses, or falls gently down in the dew of amnesty and peace. The present may perhaps be a period of this

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kind. But who is the power, that, under Providence, can procure us liberty and peace? The SOVEREIGN—that auspicious power which is always to be supposed wakeful for the public good, and which delights to blend justice with mercy. The hope of this propitious intercession gladdens my soul. I forget, for one happy moment, that I am the slave of slaves; and using the privilege of the Saturnalian season, I place the cap of liberty on my head, and holding the olive branch in my hand, I presume to address myself, in the name of this nation,

TO THE KING OF GREAT-BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

SIR,

WITH the zealous loyalty of affectionate subjects to a gracious Sovereign, whose throne is established in the hearts of his people, we presume to approach the common father of the empire. We approach him with that honest confidence which becomes us as the brethren of Britons, and the co-heirs of Magna Charta. We beseech him to listen with benignity to his loyal people of Ireland, who are ready with their lives and fortunes to defend the rights of royalty, and will make the same sacrifice rather than relinquish their own. Suffer us, great and good sir, without encroaching on our respect and veneration for the monarch, to address your feelings as a man. Let other nations invest their sovereigns with the attributes of Omnipotence, and fall down like servile idolators before the workmanship of their own hands.—Our King is not the object of superstition, but of love. We address your Majesty, not in the prophane posture of impious adoration; but casting our eyes with delight on the graciousness of your countenance, we view you with all the warmth of personal affection. Your illustrious house may well be called—THE FAMILY OF THE PEOPLE. The images of your ancestors are enshrined in our hearts, and memory sheds a sort of sa-

cred and religious light over the long-departed dead. We did not hesitate to place the crown of this kingdom on the heads of foreigners, who were so closely related to this country by the fellowship of freedom ; but on you, dear Sovereign, we look with patriotic partiality, and the attachment of loyalty is condensed into domestic affection. Never shall that day be obliterated from our remembrance, when your Majesty in ascending the throne, declared, that born and educated in this country, you gloried in the name of Briton. We come before you in the obeisance of our hearts and in the anguish of our souls. We come to pour out our complaints as children to a parent, and by the prevailing power of this pathetic appellation, we think ourselves secure of your favorable attention. We beseech you as a man who can feel for the sufferings of humanity ; as an illustrious patriot, whose life is the public care ; as a King, whose private happiness must be the public glory ; but above all, as a father, to look upon the larger family that now addresses you, with a smile of paternal condescension. FATHER OF THE PEOPLE, hear their prayers !

An intimate acquaintance with the history of the constitution will demonstrate to your Majesty, that this, like other human institutions, is liable to decay and declension. The constitution emerged at first from the same deluge of feudal barbarism which overspread all the nations of Europe ; and while most of these nations rose for a little to sink again into the baseness of servility, your people, by their insular situation, the spirit of their ancestors, the succession of fortunate circumstances, and the restorative virtue of revolutions, became the rightful inheritors of a system and plan of government, founded on the rights of human nature, and the principles of freedom. The abuses incident to every human government that carries within itself the seeds of corruption, were always corrected by a recurrence to those first principles, which through the lapse of time had been neglected or forgotten. This occa-

sional recurrence produced a sort of political regeneration, counteracted the devastations of time, and re-animated the genius of the common-weal. It is this recurrence alone which can preserve the due attemperament of the three estates, and apportion to each their adequate share of intrinsic power and external influence. The constitution is a pyramid of matchless workmanship, founded on the broad base of democracy, and ascending with due gradation, until the image of the Sovereign is exalted upon its height and terminates its elevation. No overhanging part ought to endanger its stability: No enormous power ought to destroy its just proportion.

To preserve THE BALANCE OF POWER among the nations of Europe was not the chief glory of Britain. Her chief glory was, and is, to preserve the BALANCE OF FREEDOM within herself. From this originated the greatness of her empire, the virtue and valor of her people, her extended fame, and her domestic prosperity. When the nations that drooped beneath the yoke of despotism heard the British thunder roar on their remotest shores, they wondered that the limited monarch of a little island could stretch an arm so powerful across the ocean. They did not, or could not comprehend, that the strength of millions was lodged in that arm, and that the same popular power which limited the encroachments of arbitrary sway, made our King the more terrible to his foes. The power of a British King is the liberty of the People condensed into an irresistible force, which was once courted into alliance by the proudest potentates, and hurled vengeance on those tyrants who wished to become despots of the globe. The gradual affirmation of long contested rights, through so many centuries, strung the nerves of your subjects, and made them fearless of every foe; while the prerogative of the crown no longer wild and voracious, but circumscribed within its proper bounds, became as sacred and constitutional as the franchises of the



people. Your rights, royal Sir, and the rights of your people, rest on the same foundation. As every act of arbitrary power abridges general liberty, the depression of the people is not less certainly the abasement of regal glory. If a spirit of liberty should arise in any other nation in Europe, its object must be to tear the detested despot from his seat of usurpation, introduce anarchy in place of absolute power, destroy the land with civil commotion, and drown it in blood: but the security and establishment of constitutional rights in the subjects of this realm, is the aggrandizement of our monarch, the exaltation of his dignity, and the splendor of his crown.

It is, therefore, most gracious Sovereign, from a deep and enthusiastic veneration for the genuine principles of a constitution, which equally respects the prerogative of the crown and the privileges of the people, that your subjects of Ireland are constrained to declare, in the presence of God and of your Majesty,—with urgent and unanimous voice,—that the interference of the aristocratic body in elections, and its consequential influence over a large majority of the commons house, is unconstitutional, and an intolerable grievance. It is this interference which excludes your faithful people from the least share of participation in that government which their ancestors acquired, and your ancestors redeemed; in that government, which is to superintend their properties, their liberties, and their lives. It is this interference which closes up the natural channel of communication between our sovereign and his people; and with enormous power overshadowing the land, intercepts, or turns from their destined direction, every ray of royal benevolence. It is this interference which destroys the balance of the different estates of legislature, and subjects the rights of millions to a few men, whose interests are not more hostile to the freedom of the subject than derogatory of the real dignity of the throne. Far, very far is it from our intention to offer the slightest injury to one constitu-

ent part of government, or to disturb that happy contexture which time has sanctified, and which experience has approved. We do not touch with adventurous or desperate hands, that venerable constitution which has been framed by the labor of our ancestors, and cemented with their blood. Could we dare to remove a single stone that supports the sacred edifice, the groans of these ancestors would arise from their graves, and stop us in our progress. The aristocracy, of whose extravagant influence we at present complain, has always been the guardian of the land when it moved within the circle of the constitution. It has always manifested itself a powerful and prevailing mediator and intercessor between the King and the People. But if this power swells into an overgrown magnitude by feasting on the rights of the community, if it rises to such gigantic size as *to look down even upon the throne,*—we must fly into your Majesty's presence as to an asylum, and seek for protection and mediation where alone it can be found, in your Majesty's wisdom and goodness.

With our eyes lifted up to Heaven, we declare to your Majesty, that the great source of all our national evils arises from a conviction deeply sunk in the minds of all ranks of men, that the interests of the nation are subjected to the absolute will and pleasure of men elected by, and dependent upon a selfish aristocracy.—A subjection which we must call servile and unnatural, the fertile cause of present grievances, and the pregnant parent of future oppressions, unless your Majesty's most gracious interposition shall rescue this land from impending ruin. It is not only the tyrannical exercise of power which makes it tyrannical; but all governments must be of that nature which have not in their constitution sufficient security against arbitrary power, from whatever quarter it may proceed. When, therefore, the vital principles of free government are infected, when the lustre of monarchy is sullied, and the primary franchises of the people in danger of annihi-

lation, we imagine that under these circumstances, a recurrence to first principles becomes indispensable. To reform the constitution is in this case to restore it. But little studious of names in a subject so deeply interesting, we are ready to call the attempt to renovate our constitution an innovation, if the same term be applied to those changes in our government which form the brightest pages in the annals of its history—to Magna Charta, to the Bill of Rights, to that religious revolution distinguished by the name of Reformation: and to what we shall ever deem a glorious innovation on the usage of the realm—the settlement of the illustrious House of Hanover on the throne of these kingdoms.

At the same time in which we lay our grievances before our Sovereign and our Father, we call upon the shades of an Alfred, an Edward, and a William, to hover at this instant over your honored head, and to pour down upon you the inspiration of their just, generous, and extensive counsels. We call upon Him who first founded the constitution, and mixed the genius of so many nations into a rich tide of personal valor and public glory;—upon Him, who carried on the glorious work, tempered monarchy with popular privilege, and made the greatest happiness of the greatest number the policy of the state;—upon Him, who rescued this constitution from perdition, and wrote upon his flag those golden words, “I will maintain the liberties of the empire.” We call upon you, illustrious Sovereign, in their great names, to vindicate your crown and to save your people. There are certain æras in the history of this nation when the elastic spirit of freedom struggles to throw off the incumbent weight which oppresses it, and which the lapse of time, or the abuses of the constitution had accumulated with slow and almost imperceptible additions. When a James, or a Charles, happens to mount the throne in these critical periods, they disobey or shut their eyes against the signal of Heaven, press the people with a



still heavier hand, and force the tortured nation into convulsion. Yet the crimes of the prince become the immediate or remote means of general good, and tyrants themselves, the unwilling instruments of divine benevolence. But, blessed be God, he often condescends to signalize such momentous periods by sending as his messengers patriot kings, who unite with the nation in bringing about a bloodless revolution; and thus restoring the empire to its original grandeur. In such a period appeared the immortal WILLIAM, whose conquest was without a groan, and whose triumph was without a war. That great and good monarch George the First, seconded in the same manner the designs of Heaven, and rescued the crown once more from a race that polluted it. It is yours, royal Sir, to rise not only above the crowd of kings, but above even these our most illustrious monarchs, and to become our greatest deliverer. In your power is it placed, O King! to usher in a new order of things, to perfect the glories of the constitution, and to make the name of George the Third luminous in the historic page to remotest generations. While the kingdoms of Europe are sunk in the depths of despotism, be it yours to place yourself at the head of the United Empire; and by restoring that freedom of constitution which grew with the earliest growth of the British power, and covered your ancestors with the mantle of majesty, restore to these islands their former greatness; greatness that made them happy at home and respectable abroad, greatness now sinking in the dust for the want of that actual representation which is the birthright of man, and which is absolutely necessary to make these kingdoms either FREE OR FRATERNAL. Then will the thunder of the state roll as loudly as before, and the flag of the United Empire shall be a stream of lightning flashing in the eyes of its foes. Other kings will have servile subjects; you alone will have A PEOPLE. The sun of liberty which has traveled, in the progress of centuries,

from the eastern to the western hemisphere, ripening the noble powers and faculties of human nature wherever it arrived, and leaving at its departure a dismal desolation, would stand still at your command, and its light would linger around those fortunate isles which gloried in having you for their King.

Let not our King listen to those men whose interest it is to deceive, by ascribing the distracted state of this country and its rapid depopulation to a cause so inadequate to the effect, as the suggestions of a petty party, or the licentiousness of a factious few. He who reads the human heart knows how unwilling we are to disturb the peace of the royal breast, with the complaints of a much injured people. He knows how sincerely we deprecate the horrors that attend civil commotion; and with what long-suffering and patient endurance we have reiterated our grievances in the ears of those who have treated us in return with contempt and derision. He knows that we are attached to our native soil by all the tender ties and charities of life; and that it is, in our estimation, an equal alternative to abandon it, or to die. The man, whoever he may be that can, for a moment, dissuade a virtuous prince from the most exalted display of human excellence by the liberation of millions of his fellow-creatures, is equally the enemy of the People, the Crown, and the Constitution. Listen rather, Sir, to those who have been in all ages the protectors of our constitutional monarchy and the pillars of the state,—to that great statesman and faithful servant, who though dead still speaketh, and who, under your auspices, struck a blow in the world that resounded through its history; to him, the son of that same man, now your first minister, and who in this great point reconciles opposition and destroys party; to him who presides in your most sacred counsels; to the wisest and best men in the three kingdoms:—listen to England, Scotland, and Ireland, who, in pursuit of this glorious object, are uniting

into one grand association, which every day increases in strength and in numbers.

Your people of Ireland will never despair of the commonweal, while they are suffered to appeal to your Majesty ; and while the extraordinary and multiplied exertions of private virtue and patriotism, which have of late years raised this isle into eminence, so strongly indicate that there is a fund of sense and spirit diffused throughout this kingdom ; which collected with prudence, and applied with skill, may, with the assistance of the Sovereign, successfully counteract the otherwise fatal increase of aristocratical influence. For this sole purpose of collecting the will of the nation, and of procuring the solemn verdict of public opinion, your people have assembled together and called this assembly—Convention. It is an assembly founded on the first principle of the constitution—the right of petitioning. It is an assembly which glories in pursuing the end and object of its desires, by a regular progress, by the faithful adherence of loyalty and by the ways of peace. Formed by no faction, submitted to no demagogue, it is composed of men the most honored and respected in the land ; men who at all times have supported the just prerogatives of the crown ; men whose extensive properties make them deeply interested in the peace and prosperity of the empire ; men who have guarded this island from foreign invasion and domestic disturbance ; men who have received the most splendid marks of eminence and distinction from the honor-giving hand of their beloved Sovereign.

Listen to our petitions, O our Father and our King ! Gloriously anticipate, in the way which to your wisdom may seem most meet, the redemption of your people ; and by becoming the savior of the empire become the arbiter, not merely of Europe, but of the world. The period of political reform must arrive. God will not suffer his image on earth to be long de-



faced and degraded. The light of science, the influence of wise and good men, the improved knowledge of human nature and its rights, the liberal communication of private sentiment and public opinion, and the sympathy which great souls in the most distant nations have for each other,—are all causes conspiring to introduce a revolution that will yet raise this empire to eminence, and rescue the dignity of human character. Acknowledge these auspicious signals of Heaven! Croud all the fruits of coming time, all the godlike deeds of future days into one illustrious moment! Make fate as it were your own, and seize with noble daring the honors of posterity. An Almighty Arm seems to break through the dark cloud of futurity, and slowly beckons you to the consummation of human glory. You are advancing in years. Every moment drags you nearer to the silent abode of your ancestors: and while in our hearts we are saying “O King, live for ever!” time is preparing a repository for the dead. May the hand of death fall slowly and gently on your honored head, and may no sudden stroke of disease deprive the nation a third time of their Sire and Sovereign. Give your people a free constitution, and the gratitude of remotest generations will be your noblest apotheosis.

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## LETTER VII.

### FELLOW-SLAVES!

THE spirit of the North has much influence on the spirit of the nation. The North itself is impelled by the spirit of particular counties; and in these counties the ascendant power of individuals, if it does not generate the love of liberty, is always found to direct, to modify, to confirm, or to restore it. I like aristocracy well, if this term indicates only the influence

of wise and good men, when the best are the most powerful, and when virtue confers the truest nobility. The agency of such men inspired this country with a passion for public glory, quickened the inert mass of the multitude, and urged it forward into accelerated motion. A certain unaccountable languor and sluggishness of spirit in these same men have produced our political anticlimax, and the nation deprived of their sustaining influence is like to descend with inglorious gradation to its original abasement. Every one waits until he sees those take the lead who took it before ; but when the men whom you have been accustomed to follow, retreat from their conspicuous stations, you cannot readily find proper partizans to occupy their places ; you grow timid and irresolute, are obliged to give way, or at least shift your position, and all runs into disorder and confusion. I wish to believe that the apathy of the public mind proceeds merely from the fault of a few ; because this in some degree rescues the character of my country, and because the evil on this supposition is more easily corrected. It is incumbent on those distinguished individuals who espoused with so much warmth the cause of the people, seriously to reflect, that their past exertions must eventually prove prejudicial to that cause, if their assistance be now withdrawn ; for these exertions made you not only rely on the permanence of the same zeal for the time to come, but by reposing too long and too securely on the abilities of others, incapacitated you in a great measure from acting for yourselves. Much have those men to answer for at the tribunal of the public, who walk about at this time like the deaf and dumb in those counties which but a little before they had animated with ardor, and enlightened with information. This is not merely the subtraction of so much personal merit—it breaks a link in the chain that holds up the hopes of the nation ; and the stroke is felt in the remotest part of the kingdom, by the strict connexions and dependencies which have drawn the

friends of reform into the closest confederation. In looking over the list of what may be called the absentee counties, I scarcely credit my eyes when I see that one which led the van now lingering in the rear, I address myself

#### TO THE COUNTY OF ARMAGH.

TO that county which had the distinction of originating the first Dungannon meeting; and of consequence, awakened the spirit of reform throughout the North. Are those who first came on the field ambitious to be the first in moving off? Are they ashamed to finish what they were so eager to begin? Where are the redoubtable 6000 who subscribed their names to a petition, which almost carpeted the House of Commons, and gave additional influence even to a Brownlow? Your county is now an anonymous county. Like the Emperor Charles V. you sit in your coffin, rehearse your own funeral, and minister to your own obsequies; while I claim the honor of pronouncing an eulogy on that spirit which had the proud honor of lifting the volunteer standard, and marshalling our way to Dungannon. You perhaps are led to believe, that the mere expression of your wishes is sufficient, and that it is unnecessary to reiterate them; but in what are we directed to persevere, if it be not in the repeated declaration of our grievances? It is an easy direction indeed to persevere in doing nothing; but can any positive good arise from this negative conduct? I look in the dictionary for the exact meaning of this puzzling polysyllable, PERSEVERANCE, and I find that it implies steadiness in pursuit, and constancy in progress. Can we pursue and stand still, at the same time? Can the same business be at once stationary and progressive? A cessation of all active power in the people cannot surely be perseverance. An intermission in the pulse of political life, rather indicates a sudden dissolution. Does any man among you suppose that parliament will take up the question of reform this session, or any other session; if the matter in train be in-



interrupted by even a temporary suspension on the part of the public? Persevere, then, in doing as you have already done. If you have resolved, addressed, and petitioned, Lord Charlemont and Mr. Brownlow, by inciting you to perseverance, must be concluded the advocates of a meeting which carries on the work you began; for how you can persevere by altering your whole course of conduct and giving the lie to yourselves, I do not comprehend. This is a sort of zigzag perseverance which is little better than going backward; at least the H. of C. will think it the same thing, and will act accordingly. If any one step in the progress of this business was necessary, the present step must be equally so; because it springs from the rest, and tends at the same time to make your footing more broad, and therefore more secure. The enemies of reform, by cabal and intrigue, must rather animate your county than injure your meeting; and be assured that your present political non-entity is to them an apparent victory, and tells against you as a real defeat. The cause of reform in your county ought not to fear the petulance of opposition, or the tricks of debate. I should not wish that you were without enemies! It is the laborious struggle for our rights which produces the qualities of mind necessary to maintain them. The enemy I must fear is—*within yourselves*. I fear that sluggish stagnant disposition of soul which no passion can agitate, and which has neither wish nor aversion.

You ought not to wait until you hear Mr. Pitt's argument for reform, but you yourselves are to give an additional argument to Mr. Pitt. It is in your power to become an interesting topic in his speech, and the failure of the friends of reform in this kingdom must rob his eloquence of more than half its energy. Lord North will have the names of every county, not represented, carefully written down in his pocket-book; and if he begins with calling out Armagh, the members with lifted hands and eyes, will ask, if that be the county

which boasted in a Charlemont and a Brownlow? The minister depends upon Ireland as much as Ireland does on the minister. The same popularity which lifted him to his station, must support him in it. He agitates the question of reform at present, because it is a popular question; but if it ceases to be a popular question, he will also cease to harangue upon it. If Mr. Pitt be a sincere advocate for reform, he would incite you to a county meeting, were he among you at this instant. If he be an advocate for a mutilated reform, your exertion is the only mean to amplify his conceptions; and if he be but an ostensible friend, you surely ought not to delay a moment on his account.

But the assembly of delegates ought not to sit during the session of parliament! What? Did not the first men in the nation accept of delegations from the volunteer army before the people had spoken at all? Did not those very men sit in that assembly, under the eye of government, in October and November, '83; when the castle-guards were doubled, as if to give their meeting more importance and solemnity. What? Are those men whose conduct on that occasion contributed in such an eminent degree to rouse the electors of Ireland, and make them re-echo like men, the demand of their volunteer brethren—are these same men to wither and blast in a moment that flourishing spirit which ages may not revive? Has any new matter since occurred? Is a volunteer convention so much their favorite object of adoration, that it is safe, honorable and meritorious to sit as a volunteer, but base and degrading to sit as the representatives of counties, comprehending volunteers, and every other description of electors?—When, when, I say, are you to speak if not now? Who called on the people to speak?—*I know the man!* “All that remains,” said he, on the close of the volunteer convention, “is, to return to our counties and to inform them that it is for them immediately to speak out with the spirit of freemen.” Did any

man in the convention expect that the house would entertain the bill? Did any county in Ireland expect it? What was expected from the volunteer assembly? What from county-meetings? What but to rouse the universal spirit of the nation, to lay the ground out for progressive approaches, that in the end P—t might find it vain to oppose the voice of millions? What was then the language of the most eminent patriots? Be not surprized that parliament should throw out your bill and treat it with contempt. How was the octennial bill procured? How were thousands of other concessions (in their day thought as hopeless) obtained?—By progressive measures; by supporting the people and bringing them cession by cession to the charge. Forsake us not, illustrious countrymen, while we are pursuing that line of conduct which you yourselves have pointed out. Our cause is a common one: you have pledged your faith to us and to the world by your past conduct that you will not forsake us. Do for us what we have done for you. It is the people who have pointed your periods and gives a body to your figures; it was their arms that flashed conviction upon your antagonists in debate; and your eloquence receives its polish and its power from the armory of the people. Steadiness in the compact between you and the people, is all that is wanting to crown our cause with success.

It is said by high authority, that the assembly of delegates ought to be held, provided it could be made equally respectable with the volunteer convention. But who are they that can perform the conditions of this stipulation? The very same men that make it. Let them speak the commanding word, WE WILL; and it is done. We will exert ourselves for the meeting, provided it is respectable! Attend it—and it must be respectable. Let them imitate the conduct of Charlemont, a patriot whose fame has now taken a mature and mellowed tint, almost peculiar to his own illustrious character. When



called upon, six years ago, to review the volunteers then learning the rudiments of war, he did not return for answer, that he would come, *provided* there were so many thousands in the field. He came; and saw but few. He returned; and saw more. They multiplied beneath his eye, and Hannibal, the favorite horse that bore his honored master, was at length weary in slowly pacing round the long array.—He attended by proxy at Dungannon, and he presided at the convention without a provision. Honor and respect flew before him like harbingers, and announced the coming of that man who must make any meeting illustrious. This earth can supply us with few objects more illustrious than a great and active spirit, moving onward in the all-sufficiency of manly virtue, and with zeal that strikes fire from disappointment to a practicable perfection of public freedom; and if he wants a solace in his labors, transporting himself with patriotic prescience to that period when posterity shall consecrate his recorded name, and engrave it still deeper in the roll of immortality.

Freeholders and inhabitants of the County of Armagh, I call upon you to be consistent with yourselves; to follow your representatives, one of whom sat in convention; and the other nobly voted in parliament for a reform, which must indeed fix him the more securely in his seat and in your affections;—to follow that right honorable Baronet, whose steady and uniform support, in and out of convention, of your favorite object, is acknowledged by you all;—to follow a SYNNOT and a COPE, who are prompting you to your duty as freeholders and freemen. Who dare despond under such leaders? Let no man dare to despond until the dye is cast. Despondence is a poor, weeping, whimpering quality of mind, unfit for bearded men. Your country boasts of many other noble souls, that I could individually specify, who are an honor to Ireland. If they be forgotten in the roll of fame, that generosity surely is not less glorious which blesses in secret;

and they must think it a just cause of virtuous pride, that their country could engage so many advocates in her cause as to render it difficult to particularize them. There is a pleasure that some minds feel in the pursuit of liberty, which its possession could not communicate to others. You know where your strength lies—use it.—Wrestle with difficulties. Watch your enemies and your friends. You have done much. This brings on you an obligation to do more. Liberty is a precious blessing, and cannot be bought cheaply. Go on then in the way you have begun. Blend the prudence and foresight of the citizen, with the spirit and sinew of the soldier; and enter upon the new year like men that deserve to see the end of it.

A flag was once displayed from the Castle of Dublin, with this inscription, NOW OR NEVER, NOW AND FOR EVER. I think I see such a flag streaming over your heads at this important moment, an auspicious signal to lead you to glory, or an unhappy omen to foretel your doom. You seem at length to be half awakened. You rub your eyes and peep at the light, but perhaps all that you intend is to turn to the other side and take another nap, in order to complete the century. I will not suppose it. There are men among you who can act as well as suffer. I speak not to those pedantic patriots, who fight manfully in the historic field at Cannæ or Thermopylæ, but are little better than faggots in this unclassical æra of contention. I speak not of those patriots whose public spirit ebbs with an empty bottle, and flows with a bumper; or of those hypochondriacal patriots who sit in elbow-chairs deprecating the calamities that impend over their country, but never stirring one inch to avert them. I speak not to those patriots who seem always waiting until tomorrow become today, and whose endless procrastination might serve some purpose, if they could annihilate the time which now is, and contrive somehow to exist only in that which is to come. I speak to men of

active, not of passive courage; men whose deeds are their praise; men who are slow to resolve, but quick to perform; men whose private interest is the public good; and who in all political questions consult, as an oracle, the genius of the constitution. Such men there are. Come forward from the throng. Forget the distinctions of rank and station. You may be poor, and yet proudly great. No man can be too humble in his private character, or too proud as a candidate for freedom. If this country be capable of freedom, you are the men, whether in the inferior or middle stations of life, who alone are able to make it free.

#### MEN OF TYRONE,

I WISH to shame you into virtue. Let the praises which you have merited make you blush at your present inglorious silence. Did Mr. Stewart and his venerable father behave so ill at Dungannon, that you are afraid to return them to the patriot council of the nation? Did the former take his seat in the volunteer convention to go off the stage in the last and most illustrious scene of public glory? If any thing should happen in the assembly of delegates conducive to the interests of the commonweal, you ought to be personated there in order to promote it. If any thing should occur contrary to those interests, you ought to be there in order to counteract it. By being represented, you may do good or prevent harm; but what good are you to gain by being, as it were, annihilated. If the other counties take the lead in returning representatives, will not yours cut a ridiculous figure, sneaking in perhaps the lag and hinderling of the whole. For shame! For shame!

#### MEN OF DERRY,

I REJOICE to see that your city has led the way in rescuing your wounded fame. Public zeal is condensed in towns,



but in the larger extent of counties, it is too apt to burn away like powder in the open air, and it consumes with less effect. Your county contains the very *Luther* of modern reform. That man will not desert his country, unless his country deserts him. This sanguine spirit appears extravagant by its striking contrast with the languor, indifference, and frigid neutrality of the times. The mild *Melancthon* would never have brought about the reformation of religion; and there is, God knows, a sufficient quantity of indolence, timidity and selfishness diffused throughout the land, to apprehend much danger from a disposition seemingly so combustible. You are apt to complain of the perfidy of patriots. Take care that the change in your own minds does not deceive you into the belief that there is a change in others. When we move round along with the earth, the fixed stars seem to sink in the apparent horizon. The perfidy of a single man is nothing to the perfidy of a whole people. Hear me!—If you be silent now, the fact is that *you*, the men who lived in the last year, break faith with *you* the same men that live in the present. You are traitors to yourselves. You basely violate that trust which other counties reposed in you; and you stand, by your own acknowledgement, a renegade from your party, your professions, and your principles.

#### MEN OF DOWN.

ARISE—the day is come! If there be any vital principle left within you, if you be not sunk for ever in the putrid pool of corruption, aspire to be men. Look down with pity and contempt on that spirit of low intrigue and state chicanery, which petty peddling politicians employ to divide and distract you. Their narrow souls cannot comprehend that sublime policy of acting with openness and candor, but rely on little shifts and the coward arts of mean expedients. O! how heartily do I despise those men that hang half-way between

Heaven and Hell, too black for the one, and too white for the other! Go, men of Down, go to the meeting which many of you have summoned; and go with the confidence of proud yeomanry, who scorn to sink to the vulgar level of the great. Go, and your enemies will not dare to look you in the face. But if they do, I shall honor their boldness, and rejoice that at length we can *see* our enemies. I shall rejoice to have them in the sunshine, to draw them out from their ambuscade of whispers and insinuations. It is the venom of the shaft I fear, not the vigor of the bow. I beseech them to attend the meeting. It is to be held at Downpatrick the fifteenth of the current month. They have time enough to prepare their engine-ry, to scour their rusty shields, and to brighten the spear. Let us see them face to face in the open area of argument, and in the light of day. They shall be heard with attention, and with all possible respect. The cause which we adopt scorns to borrow help from the paltry artifices of election, nor do we wish to wound our own pride by receiving that applause which depends on the depreciation of a rival. We do not doubt of their abilities: all we want is to see them exerted. I call then again on every man who is bold enough to declare in the face of Ireland that a reform is unnecessary, to attend at this meeting summoned by fifteen hundred freeholders; and if they find no one present but themselves, let them chuse their chairman, appoint their secretary, and sign the sentence of merited damnation to the public spirit of the county of Down. Freeholders, when you assemble, make your choice of men as delegates, who are ever ready to countenance the just claims, and animate the reasonable hopes of the nation; men whose minds are more akin to the sturdy oak than to the weeping willow; men who can keep to their patriotic purpose, unmoved, unshaken, unseduced, and unterrified—though worlds should judge it singular, rash, and out of season; men like the four delegates you returned to the

volunteer convention, men like the brother of—ROBERT STEWART.

#### MEN OF MONAGHAN,

REMEMBER those resolutions in which you agreed in the most ample manner to the necessity of a reform. The reform is not necessary, unless every county acts, as the half of Ireland has already acted. The reform is not necessary, if every county takes merely the trouble of expressing their opinion, without moving or exerting itself to make that opinion successful. Let the people hear me when I aver, that this country is on some occasions as much injured by the friends of reform, as by its enemies. They break that unity of plan; they disorder that regularity in station; they check that celerity in execution, which most usually command success, and which always deserve it. Why say that reform is necessary, and yet neglect to make use of the very means which your countrymen have declared to be the best means of procuring it. By breaking off from that plan which has been generally adopted, you are, (I hope unconsciously) commencing a CIVIL WARFARE in your country, which will leave its inhabitants a prey to its worst enemies. Every county ought to impel the power already in motion, although they might now think of a better procedure. Retrogradation at present is the dereliction of the whole. What would the principles of the MONTGOMERY family lead them to at this crisis? SONS! ask your father. He will not answer you. It is indeed needless. His virtue, senatorial integrity, and public spirit, make the best reply. FRANCIS LUCAS, hold up your head, and lead the Whig interest once more to the charge. If patriotism be your profession, pursue it like a man who labors in his vocation. If it be your principle, act like a man of principle, and approve yourself of that elastic metal, which may be bent for some time, but cannot be broken.



Let the Men of FERMANAGH and of CAVAN add two new strings to the Irish Harp, and it will then, in rich and deep variety of tone, resound throughout the nation. Aristocracy will dread it like the sound of the last trumpet, and will beseech the mountains to fall and cover them; while the genius of the common-weal will rise in glorious resurrection, shaking the dust from off his sacred head, and with a smile of benignity that breaks on his countenance through the cloud of oblivion, recognizing those much loved children, who, even in these degenerate days, have the virtue and resolution to be FREE.

Listen all of you to the words of the Minister,—“ I will support the question of reform to the utmost of my strength, and exert my whole power and credit as a man and a minister, honestly and boldly, to carry such a meliorated system of representation as may place the constitution on a footing of permanent security.” If government be sincere with respect to England, it now depends upon the unanimous voice of this nation to interest the minister equally in favor of IRELAND. If the will of the public be for a free parliament, let the public speak. If it continues silent now, the *form* of the Constitution may remain, but the *soul* is departed for ever. Ministers and Kings may do what they chuse; but the only specific cure for the corruption of the representative body, is the soundness and integrity of the people. Without this, Freedom is gratuitous. It hangs upon the tenure of a moment; and concessions of commercial or constitutional privileges are the alms of beggary, and the trappings of servitude. Accidental state necessity, or the caprice of political character are poor securities for the rights of a nation. Magna Charta is a dead letter, if the root of freedom rots in the hearis of the people; and repeal, or renunciation, are but the donatives of despotism. You are now to manifest to all the nations of the earth, whether the caprice of fortune, a tu-

multuary fit of national passion, or a conversion of public principle and a permanent revolution in your character as a people—have been your motives of action. Whether Irish patriotism is merely an imp of faction, dandled and petted by a party, the sickly spawn of a luxurious city, or the nerve, support and glory of the island. NOW OR NEVER, NOW AND FOR EVER! I lay my hand on my mouth while my heart burns within me, and with the consciousness of having done my duty, sink into the noiseless tenor of professional life.

ORELLANA,

*Rath-gellair mic Dúach.*

AN IRISH HELOT.

## THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS.

IT will perhaps be now necessary to go back for a short period when we shall behold the splendid and prominent efforts made by the Irish Volunteers, to secure by a reform of their legislature the great principles which they succeeded in establishing by the Revolution of 1782. It would appear as if the race to freedom had been too rapid, and that the most zealous advocates of the FREE CONSTITUTION and the FREE TRADE of 82 were apprehensive, that a nation which found itself capable of doing so much in the assertion of its rights, might go one step further, and actually declare its total independence of, and separation from England. Those who were of opinion, that both countries were essentially necessary to each other's glory and independence; who felt that, united, they were powerful, and that, separated, they might be the prey of the common enemy, immediately took the alarm; and, from enthusiastic supporters of those measures which established the legislative rights of Ireland, became equally determined opponents of any proceedings which led to results that might terminate in the separation of the countries. The influence of the English cabinet was also exerted to the utmost to counteract the efforts of the reformers, and to blast that fair and promising fruit, which should naturally have flowed from the wise and conciliating measures of 82. The coalition ministry, however, of 1783; the unnatural and monstrous junction of Lord North and Mr. Fox, generated an administration in both countries, so chequered and so various, so conflicting in disposition, and so opposite in character, that we are not to wonder the old friends of Ireland should have been called off from their favorite pursuit; or, that Mr. Flood and Mr. Grattan should have been seen opposed to each other in the great struggles for Parliamentary Reform.



In England, the question of Parliamentary Reform occupied every mind. A declaration of the increased influence of the Crown had, under the auspices of a great constitutional lawyer, Mr. Dunning, been made by the representatives of the People. For this, and in short all abuses whatever, a Parliamentary Reform was loudly called for. In some places, delegates the most respectable for rank and talent were appointed to consider a subject of such magnitude; and Mr. Pitt, then first advancing to public notice, with every aid that a splendid name and splendid abilities could give him, seemed, as a statesman, to assume to himself the almost exclusive guardianship of this favored measure, and to render such an illustrious and necessary tutelage the best foundation of his own fame, and a more exalted state of prosperity.

If England, however, had reason to complain of the inadequacy or inequality of its representation in the House of Commons, the People of Ireland had at least as much cause to find fault with theirs; and, had the subject been confined (writes Mr. Hardy in his valuable memoirs of the Earl of Charlemont) to county and city meetings, or occasional assemblies of delegates, unexceptionably convened, no question could have arisen as to the propriety, and perhaps real utility of such discussions. Petitions, the result of these meetings, might have been duly laid before Parliament; and, though immediate success, or any thing like it, could not be looked for, the attention of the House of Commons to the original and simple proposition of a Parliamentary Reform would not have been directed to matters of an extraneous nature, and totally hostile to the cause with which they so improperly intermingled themselves. What was the case at the present moment (1783)? The voice of England in favor of a reform, was re-echoed here, not by the people, constitutionally speaking, but by the volunteer army, issuing indeed from the people, yet still a military body numerous and formidable.

Parliament had, as Mr. Grattan justly stated, not bullied, but backed by them, overthrown the jurisdiction of another parliament; and, however well intentioned the volunteer army in general undoubtedly was, it is but too certain, that many that belonged to it wished not to modify, not to meliorate; but *at once overset the popular branch* of their own legislature, without whose regular, though slow co-operation, they could have obtained nothing; for all the respectability, rank, property and sound intellect of the country would have opposed them, and England, though crippled at that time by the war, was not laid prostrate.

So writes Mr. Hardy: but to his reasoning, or the *dictum* of Mr. Grattan we cannot agree. We can see no just reason why the Volunteers of 83 should not have as influential a voice as the Volunteers of 82. They were the same men; with the same views and the same principles; differing only from parliament in the conviction of the absolute necessity of a Parliamentary Reform to secure the conquest they had made. Did Mr. Grattan or Mr. Hardy imagine the Volunteers of Ireland wanted *more* than a pure and perfect representation of the People in Parliament, and did the latter *not* feel that without such a representation all the efforts of Mr. Grattan, his Free Constitution and his Free Trade, were mere phantoms, brilliant and dazzling indeed, but transient and momentary? Events demonstrated this truth.

But what is the best vindication of the Volunteers of Ireland, who, with arms in their hands, and in solemn convention, pressed the necessity and the justice of parliamentary reform? Their station and their character in the country are the best evidence of the integrity and purity of their views. But at this period the English Cabinet seemed to have repented of the concessions it had made to Ireland, and employed every artifice which the most ingenious sophistry could sug-

gest, to defeat the grand and honest object of the nation—the accomplishment of parliamentary reform.

A more equal Representation of the People in the Parliament of Ireland.

AT a meeting of delegates from forty-five companies of the Province of Ulster, assembled at Lisburn the 1st of July, 1783, in pursuance of a public requisition of the Ulster regiment, viz. southern battalion of 1st Ulster regiment; first independent county Down regiment; the Union regiment; Ulster regiment; Belfast first volunteer company; and Belfast volunteer company.

LIEUT. COL. SHARMAN IN THE CHAIR.

Resolved unanimously, That a general meeting of the volunteer delegates of the province of Ulster, on the subject of A MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT, is hereby earnestly entreated; to be held at Dunganon, on Monday, 8th Sept. next.

Resolved unanimously, That the following gentlemen (seven to be a quorum) be appointed a committee of Correspondence for communicating with the other corps of the province, for taking preparatory steps to forward the intentions of this meeting, and for collecting the best authorities and information on the subject of a parliamentary reform, viz.

|                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Lieut. Col. Sharman,   | Col. Rowley,         |
| Capt. Black,           | Major John Crawford, |
| Dr. Alex. Crawford,    | Lieut. Col. Banks,   |
| Major Burden,          | Mr. Robt. Thomson,   |
| Capt. Wad. Cunningham, | Capt. T. Prentice,   |
| Rev. Mr. Craig,        | Lieut. Tomb.         |
| Dr. S. Moore,          |                      |

Resolved unanimously, That the following address be published in the public prints:



TO THE VOLUNTEER ARMY OF THE PROVINCE  
OF ULSTER.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

IN common with every class of Irishmen, you are sensible that this kingdom for many centuries, might have continued to bear its chains in ignoble and indigent obscurity, had not an army of its citizens, by a great effort, dared to cast them off.

That the dignified conduct of that army lately restored to the imperial crown of Ireland its original splendor, to nobility its ancient privileges, and to the nation at large its inherent rights as a sovereign independent state; that by inculcating the glorious spirit of toleration, it has united the once distracted inhabitants of this country into an indissoluble mass, and promoted the most exalted reverence for the laws,—are facts that will exhibit a splendid and interesting figure in the annals of the age.

From a military institution, so singular in its nature as to comprehend the several gradations of nobles, commoners, merchants, yeomen and mechanics, every substantial good will be expected by wise and virtuous men.

They will with honest pride, behold in the state an unparalleled combination of the military with the civil character, existing only for the general interests of the community; and prepared, on the purest principles of the constitution, to give efficacy to the wishes of three millions of people.

The idea of a well digested parliamentary reform, has ever experienced a favorable reception in the uncorrupted breasts of Irishmen and of Britons. It has been uniformly looked up to as the true source of public virtue and of political salvation, by the first characters these kingdoms have produced. In this age, we have seen it warmly supported by that consummate statesman the late Earl of Chatham; and revived

by the heir to his abilities and name, the present William Pitt. It has received the sanction of the most eminent and honest men in both houses of the British parliament; of a great number of the most respectable shires in England; of the volunteer delegates of the province of Munster; and, within these few days, of the unanimous vote of thirty-eight corps, reviewed at Belfast.

Among the many glorious effects of which a more equal representation of the people in parliament would be productive, the following are obvious: The destruction of that party-spirit whose baneful influence has at all times been injurious to the public weal;—a revival of the native dignity of the crown, by imparting to each branch of the legislature its distinct and proportional weight;—and the abolition of that train of courtly mercenaries who must ever continue to prey on the vitals of public virtue, till, the balance of the constitution being restored, the necessity for governing by regular systems of seduction, shall no longer exist.

Then, would the constituent body regain its constitutional control over its trustees,—and venal majorities would not be found to support the most dishonorable and pernicious measures, in opposition to the sense of the unpolluted part of the legislature, as well as contrary to the universal wishes of the public; and to the true intent of the institution of parliaments.

With due deference for the august body which we have presumed to address, we therefore beg leave to express our wishes that the volunteer delegates of Ulster would assemble with the same spirit of loyalty, patriotism, and firmness, which actuated them on the memorable 15th of February, 1782:—to deliberate on the most constitutional means of procuring a more equal representation of the people in the parliament of Ireland—as the only measure which can give permanency to the late renovation of our constitution, or restore that virtue

to the representative body, without which, though the mere forms of a free government may be preserved, its spirit must inevitably perish.

Signed by order of the meeting,

WILLIAM SHARMAN, CHAIRMAN.

Lieut. Col. Sharman having left the chair, and Lieut. Col. Sir Walter Synnot taken it,

Resolved, that the thanks of this meeting be given to our worthy chairman, for his very proper conduct in the chair.

HENRY JOY, JUN. SECRETARY.

#### TO THE DUNGANNON DELEGATES.

The report of a Committee of Correspondence, appointed by forty-five corps assembled by public advertisement at Lisburn on the 1st July last, for the purpose of obtaining information on the important subject of a more equal representation of the people, in the parliament of Ireland.

THE Committee in discharge of the trust invested in them, immediately opened a correspondence with a number of the most eminent and well-informed characters in Great-Britain and Ireland; and received answers fraught with most valuable information on the subject.

Such of them as enter minutely into the business, will be submitted to the provincial assembly, if thought eligible, considering the length of their detail, and the great delay which their disclosure will unavoidably occasion. If it be more agreeable to the meeting, for the general diffusal of a body of knowledge on so great a political subject, the principal letters will be published by the committee's secretary;—by which means the despatch necessary to so great an assembly will be promoted.



The Yorkshire Association, so celebrated for their spirit and numbers, meet about the close of the present month, in order previously to receive the decisions of this province.

The Society for Constitutional Knowledge, in London, in which are enrolled the names of the first characters in England, (strenuous laborers in the glorious business of reform in our sister kingdom)—have ordered the addresses of the Ulster regiment, and of the forty-five corps, convening the provincial meeting of Ulster, to be entered in their books, published in the prints, and circulated gratis through the kingdom, in order that the exertions of Ireland may give a spur to the spirit of the British nation.

The Committee is rejoiced to observe, that the English letters are full of expressions of a high sense of the wisdom, spirit, and unanimity that have characterized the volunteer army of Ireland; and that they all concur in conceiving the present to be the very moment in which a radical parliamentary reform can best be effected. They universally agree in the idea, that the delegates at Dungannon should enter into a very comprehensive view of the matter; so as the principles of reform may be strongly marked in their resolves:—receiving the sanction and concurrence of a general convention of delegates from the four provinces—coincidence of sentiment in which, they hold to be certainty of success.

Founded on much deliberation, assisted by the best information they could procure, the Committee have ventured to prepare resolutions, comprehending a general system of ideas on the subject, which they will take the liberty, through their chairman, Lieut. Col. Sharman, with much humility, to move in the august body of representatives of the volunteer army of Ulster.

The Committee of Correspondence have now only to apologize for their inability to so weighty a charge:—Happy if their labors shall meet the approbation of their fellow-citizens; or

tend in the most remote degree to any valuable purpose. They trust that the spirit of firmness and integrity which has already restored this ancient kingdom to her rank in the nations, will crown the 8th Sept. 1783, as a day which is to form the ground-work of internal emancipation, on a basis as great as that on which our rights as an independent nation, have been with such rapid success already established.

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#### ULSTER VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION.

At a meeting of two hundred and seventy-two companies of the volunteer army of the province of Ulster, by their delegates, held at Dungannon, on Monday the 8th of September, 1783 ;

COL. JAMES STEWART, TYRONE REGT. IN THE CHAIR,

The following resolutions were unanimously entered into :

I. RESOLVED unanimously, That freedom is the indefeasible birth-right of Irishmen and Britons, derived from the author of their being ; and of which no power on earth, much less a delegated power, hath a right to deprive them.

II. Resolved unanimously, That they only are free, who are governed by no laws but those to which they assent, either by themselves in person ; or by their representatives freely chosen ; subject to the control ; and frequently returning into the common mass of constituents.

III. Resolved unanimously, That the majority of our house of commons is not chosen by the people ; but returned by THE MANDATE OF PEERS OR COMMONERS ; either for indigent boroughs, where scarcely any inhabitants exist ; or considerable cities and towns, where the elective franchise is vested in

a few ; who are thus suffered to place the highest trusts of society, against the interest and will of the many, in the hands of men, who seldom act as if they considered themselves accountable for their conduct to the people.

IV. Resolved unanimously, That by the ancient constitution of parliaments, elections of representatives were for centuries annual, and in many instances more frequent ; and the exercise of suffrage, among freemen, universal.

V. Resolved unanimously, That every approach to those fundamental principles, tends to a renovation of, not an innovation in, the constitution.

VI. Resolved unanimously, That the elective franchise ought, of right, to extend to all those, and those only, who are likely to exercise it, for the public good.

VII. Resolved unanimously, That the present inadequate representation, and the long duration of parliaments, destroy that balance which, by our constitution, should subsist between the three estates of the legislature ; render the commons' house independent of the people ; procure certain majorities in favor of every administration ; and threaten either an absolute monarchy, or that still more odious government, a tyrannical aristocracy.

#### VIII. RESOLVED, THEREFORE,

That the present imperfect representation, and the long duration of parliaments, are UNCONSTITUTIONAL and INTOLERABLE GRIEVANCES.

IX. Resolved unanimously, that as the voice of the commons of Ireland is no less necessary for every legislative purpose than that of either the king or lords, the people have a just and inherent right to correct the abuses of representation, whenever such abuses shall have so increased, as to rob them of their constitutional share in their own government.

X. Resolved unanimously, That it is the interest of parliament itself to effect a substantial reform ; as the very exis-



tence of that assembly must become precarious, when it shall lose the confidence of the people, to whom originally it owed its creation—and from whom alone its powers were derived.

XI. Resolved unanimously, That we solemnly pledge ourselves to each other and to our country, to seek a speedy and effectual redress of these our grievances, and to co-operate with our fellow-subjects, in every exertion necessary to obtain it.

We call for the aid of every upright senator; of every man, whether in Ireland or Great-Britain, who bears or wishes to acquire the title of a freeman!

XII. Resolved unanimously, That we have attended with admiration to the noble, though hitherto ineffectual efforts, of those illustrious characters and virtuous citizens, who, in England and Scotland, strenuously labour to procure redress of similar grievances. May the examples of the sister nations, mutually animate the inhabitants of each to persevere with unremitting ardor, until the glorious labor be finally completed.

XIII. Resolved unanimously, That a committee (of five persons from each county) be now chosen, by ballot, to represent this province in a grand national convention, to be held at noon in the Royal Exchange of Dublin, on the tenth day of November next; to which we trust each of the other provinces will send delegates, to digest and publish a plan of parliamentary reform—to pursue such measures as may appear to them most likely to render it effectual; to adjourn from time to time, and convene provincial meetings, if found necessary.

The following gentlemen were accordingly chosen by ballot, viz.

#### DELEGATES.

##### ANTRIM.

Col. O'Neill,  
Lieut. Col. Sharman,  
Col. Rowley,

##### DOWN.

Col. Robert Stewart,  
Capt. Matt. Forde, junior,  
Major Crawford,

Capt. W. Todd Jones,  
Col. T. M. Jones.

## ARMAGH.

Earl of Charlemont,  
Lieut. Col. Brownlow,  
Sir Capel Molyneaux,  
Lieut. Col. Sir Walter Synott,  
Capt. James Dawson.

## CAVAN.

Lord Farnham,  
The Hon. J. J. Maxwell,  
Capt. Fran. Saunderson,  
Col. Geo. Montgomery,  
Capt. Henry Clements.

## DONEGALL.

Col. Alexander Montgomery,  
Col. John Hamilton,  
Lieut. Col. A. Stewart,  
Col. Robt. M'Clintock,  
Lieut. Col. Ch. Nesbitt.

Col. Pat. Savage,  
Capt. Gawin Hamilton.

## FERMANAGH.

Col. Irvine,  
Col. Sir Arthur Brooke,  
Capt. A. C. Hamilton,  
Jason Hazard, Esq.  
Capt. Jas. Armstrong.

## LONDONDERRY.

Lord Bishop of Derry,  
Col. Rt. Hon. Thos. Connolly,  
Col. Rt. Hon. Edward Carey,  
Capt. Leckey,  
Capt. Ferguson.

## MONAGHAN.

Col. Chs. Powell Leslie,  
Col. Frs. Lucas,  
Col. John Montgomery,  
Capt. Wm. Forster,  
Col. Jas. Hamilton.

## TYRONE.

Col. Stewart,  
Lieut. Col. Montgomery,  
Col. Jas. Alexander,  
Lieut. Col. Charleton,  
Capt. Eccles.

XIV. Resolved unanimously, That it be an instruction to said committee, that the delegates from each county do prepare, and carry with them to the national convention an account of all the cities, towns, and boroughs in this province; the mode of election in such as at present return members to parliament; as near as may be the proportionate number of Protestant and Roman Catholic inhabitants in each; and a conjecture of their comparative properties.

XV. Resolved unanimously, That we are decided in opinion that the representatives of the people ought not in future to consent to any bill of supply for a longer term than twelve months ; nor more than six months, until a complete redress of said grievances be obtained.

The following address of the first regiment of Irish Brigade to the chairman of this association, on the 15th of Feb. 1782, being read :

' To Col. WILLIAM IRVINE, Chairman of the Ulster volunteer delegates assembled at Dungannon,  
Feb. 15th, 1782.

' SIR,

' I am directed by the first regiment of Irish Brigade to acquaint you, that on the 22d day of last month, at a full meeting of that corps, they unanimously adopted the resolutions of the Ulster delegates assembled at Dungannon, on Friday, 15th February last.

' To that assembly, unprecedented in the annals of mankind, which is the glory of the present times, and must be the wonder of futurity, Ireland owes her emancipation.

' Toleration, the offspring of benevolence and wisdom, was no sooner adopted by that illustrious body, than received and cherished through the whole nation, and the inhabitants of Ireland, from a divided became an UNITED PEOPLE.

' You, sir, and the highly respectable body of which you are chairman, will hear with pleasure of every accession of strength to the volunteer army : I am happy, therefore, to acquaint you, that this regiment, though but four months embodied, is numerous and respectable ; a circumstance sufficient to convince the world, that the public virtue of this kingdom daily increases, and that the glorious flame of Liberty blazes through the nation.

' At this great crisis, when the western world, while laying the foundation of a rising empire, temptingly holds out a



system of equal liberty to mankind, and waits with open arms to receive the emigrants from surrounding nations; we think it a duty we owe to our country, to promote, as far as our example can reach, an affectionate coalition of the inhabitants of Ireland. Animated by this sentiment, and convinced that national unanimity is the basis of national strength, this regiment affords a striking instance how far the divine spirit of toleration can unite men of all religious descriptions in one great object, the support of a free constitution.

‘ I have the honor to be, Sir,  
with the highest respect,  
your faithful and most  
obedient servant,

JOHN SUTTON, PRESIDENT.

XVI. Resolved unanimously, That this association entertain the most grateful sense of the approbation of such liberal and patriotic men as compose that respectable body; that we rejoice in the accession of their abilities to the common cause, and that we will be happy to co-operate with them in effecting the complete liberty and happiness of the good people of this kingdom.

XVII. Resolved unanimously, That the following address to the volunteer armies of the provinces of Munster, Leinster and Connaught, be printed with these resolutions.

#### TO THE VOLUNTEER ARMIES OF THE PROVINCES OF MUNSTER, LEINSTER AND CONNAUGHT.

FELLOW-SUBJECTS,

THE transcendant events which our united efforts have produced, present an eminent instance of the protecting hand of Heaven;—whilst the progressive virtue and general union of the people, naturally prompt them to revive the spirit of an unrivalled constitution, and to vindicate the inherent rights of men.

The most important work yet remains ; which, neglected, our past attainments are transitory, unsubstantial, insecure !—an extension to thousands of our beloved fellow-citizens of a franchise, comprehending the very essence of liberty : and drawing the line which precisely separates the freeman from the slave.

Suffer us, therefore, to conjure you by every endearing tie that connects man with man—with unceasing zeal to pursue one of the most glorious objects that ever agitated the human mind : a restoration of virtue to a senate long unaccustomed to speak the voice of the people ; a renovation of the ancient balance of our government ; and a firm establishment of the first gifts of nature, on the ruins of an avowed corruption, at once the bane of morals and of liberty.

From a *Grand National Convention*, distinguished by integrity, and inspired with the courageous spirit of the constitution, every blessing must result.

With one voice, then—the voice of united millions, let Ireland assert her claim to freedom.

Through her four provincial assemblies let her temperate declarations flow to one common center ; and there, matured into an extensive plan of reform, be produced as the solemn act of THE VOLUNTEER ARMY OF IRELAND : as a demand of rights, robbed of which, the unanimated forms of a free government would be a curse ; and existence itself, cease to be a blessing.

#### FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

The eyes of an enlightened world, are this instant upon us : Munster has, in part, already led the way ; and millions of our fellow-subjects of Britain, in whom the flame of liberty still burns with lustre, behold with delight our exertions in the common cause ; and in our success, see the certain har-binger of their own.

Let the reflection that Greece, the seat of liberty and of science; that Rome, the mistress of the world; and that innumerable States, once flourishing and free, now lie prostrate by the hand of tyranny—*teach Ireland wisdom*. To our deliberative assemblies they convey awful warning to be spirited, unanimous, and firm; lest the present wretched condition of other countries be soon the fate of our own!

May the supreme ruler of the universe crown his other blessings, by being present with us,—by promoting union and the love of our country among all ranks of men; and by finally directing our exertions to virtue, liberty, and peace!

A specific plan of parliamentary reform, being produced and read by the committee of correspondence:

XVIII. Resolved unanimously, that said plan be referred to the consideration of the national convention, and that the thanks of this meeting be presented to lieut. colonel Sharman and the gentlemen of the committee of correspondence, for their great trouble in collecting information on a parliamentary reform, and for their abilities and zeal in digesting matter for the meeting of this day.

XIX. Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the lord bishop of Derry, for his attendance and assistance in the business of this day; for his warm attachment to the volunteer cause; and for proving himself the steady friend to the liberties of Ireland upon all occasions.

XX. Resolved unanimously, That the sincere thanks of this meeting be presented to the inhabitants of Dungannon, for their very polite conduct, and to the Dungannon battalion, for their vigilant conduct when on guard this day.

XXI. Resolved unanimously, That we lament that unavoidable business of consequence, prevented our late chairman, Col. William Irvine, from attending this meeting, and that the thanks of this meeting be transmitted by our secretary



to that gentleman for his uniform zeal and fidelity in the cause of his country.

THE cause of Reform had made a rapid progress in every part of the kingdom. The light which the glorious revolution of 1782 shed upon the nation, and the enthusiasm with which it animated the people to establish, on a broad and firm foundation, that liberty which they had wrung from a reluctant government, encouraged the most distinguished patriots of the day to prosecute the cause of Reform with redoubled ardor. The Volunteers had accomplished the freedom of Ireland, and the Irish Parliament *but* obeyed an impulse they could not presume to control. Mr. Grattan was the powerful organ through which the new-born liberty of his country communicated its wishes: but Flood, anxious to out-run his great rival in the glorious race, put himself forward as the man who could best complete what Grattan so well begun. The eyes of the nation were anxiously turned upon the military convention that was to meet at Dungannon on the 8th September, 1783; but unfortunately for the cause of Reform, the great majority of the people, the Catholics of Ireland, sat with folded arms, like the spectators in a theatre, contemplating struggles, in the result of which they were doomed to have no interest whatever. The cry of Freedom was confined to the small circle of the Protestant population. The old prejudices which characterised the Irish Protestant colony, lived with equal force and equal acrimony in the bosoms of the most distinguished leaders among the Reformers: even the great Flood could not look at the emancipation of his Catholic countrymen without alarm; and Lord Charlemont, to whom all the Reformers looked up with veneration and affection, was one of the last to surrender his hereditary

prejudices against the great majority of his countrymen. The Government of the day, knowing the narrowness of the base on which the Reformers built, easily anticipated the result of their efforts: it wisely conjectured, that they would be beaten by their own bigotry.

The kingdom was now much agitated. A provincial meeting had met at Cork on the 1st of March, 1783, and entered into various resolutions in favor of Reform. On the 24th of July, following, whilst Lord Charlemont was on a visit at Lurgan, to his friend Mr. Brownlow, he received the annexed letter from the Committee of Correspondence appointed by the delegates of forty-five corps, assembled at Lisburn, on the 1st of July, 1783, which committee met at Belfast on the 19th of the same month. It was this committee which corresponded with the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Pitt, and other promoters of Reform.

MY LORD,

*Belfast, July 19, 1783.*

THE very glorious and effectual part your Lordship has taken in the emancipation of this kingdom, naturally leads the Volunteers of the North of Ireland to up look to your Lordship, for a decided support in favour of reform, which your Lordship has already declared meets your warmest approbation. To a nobleman so well acquainted with the ruinous state of the representation of Ireland, in us to aim at conveying information were superfluous and unnecessary. The day fixed for the Dungannon meeting being very near, viz. the 8th of September next, and our day of meeting, as a committee for arranging the information we shall receive, being the 20th of August, we humbly hope your Lordship will favor us before the latter date, with your sentiments at large on this subject, pointing out such a specific mode of reform, and the most eligible steps leading to it, as come up to your Lordship's ideas. We have yet another favor to request, viz. that your Lordship would

inform us, whether shortening the duration of Parliaments, exclusion of pensioners, limiting the number of placemen, and a tax on absentees, or any of them, be in your Lordship's opinion subjects in which the Volunteers of Ireland ought to interfere; and we more earnestly entreat, that your Lordship may favour us with a sketch of such resolutions, as your Lordship would think proper to be proposed at Dungannon. Your Lordship will be so good to address your reply to our chairman, at Lisburn.

Signed by order, &c.

This letter made a deep impression on Lord Charlemont. It was to him a sufficient indication of what I have already stated, that there were some leaders of the Volunteers, determined not to limit their operations to a parliamentary reform, but to visit, regulate, perhaps control, every department in the state. The points alluded to in their letter met his approbation, the tax on absentees excepted. The principal object, a parliamentary reform, would, he was afraid, be crushed to nothing, amid such a crowd of measures with which they proposed to accompany it. Altogether the business did not seem to him to wear the most propitious aspect. Something however was to be done, and he immediately wrote the following letter. Perhaps few men had ever a more delicate and difficult part to act than Lord Charlemont, not only at the present juncture, but throughout the whole of this momentous business.

GENTLEMEN,

*Lurgan, July 24, 1783.*

PLEASE to accept my most sincere acknowledgements for your kind, though I fear, too partial expressions, as well as for the honour you have done me, in applying to me for advice on a matter so justly interesting to you, and so very important to this nation. But while I thank you for your kindness towards me, I cannot avoid perceiving that your partiality has induced you greatly to over-rate my abilities,



which are far unequal to the task you have assigned me. A reform in the representation of Ireland is a measure which most certainly meets with my warmest approbation, and you may be assured that I shall co-operate with every sincere lover of his country, towards the attainment of that desirable object; but to point out a specific mode, is a matter of so difficult a nature, that I should esteem myself presumptuous, if I should attempt it,—certain as I am, that it will require the united efforts, and the most deliberate consideration of the wisest men in this kingdom, to produce such a plan, as may be deemed unexceptionable. The pain, however, which I must at all times feel from being compelled to refuse my immediate compliance with any request of your's, is in the present instance somewhat alleviated, by my being clearly of opinion, that it is not now necessary that such mode should be pointed out to you; and since you have been pleased to ask my advice, permit me, as a sincere friend to the object of our mutual wishes, to advise, that at the Dungannon meeting, the measure alone should be recommended, without specifying any mode whatsoever; which last consideration ought, according to the best of my judgment, to be left entirely to the mature deliberation of your Parliament, and particularly of those representatives whom you are now about to chuse.

Respecting the other points upon which you desire my judgment, they are all of them important, and of nice discussion; but I will abstain from entering into them for this plain reason, that I would heartily recommend it to you, to confine yourselves to the one great measure only, which when once carried into execution, will infallibly secure all benefits of inferior magnitude.

I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedt. and most faithful Servt.

CHARLEMONT,

The meeting at Dungannon was held on the day appointed, consisting of Delegates from 269 military corps.—Mr. James Stewart, member for the county of Tyrone, Lord Charlemont's particular and valued friend, was called to the chair. Lord Bristol, (Bishop of Derry), was also present. Many resolutions were entered into; but the principal one was, "That a committee of five persons from each county be chosen by ballot, to represent this province (Ulster) in a grand national convention, to be held at noon, in the Royal Exchange of Dublin, on the 10th of November next, to which we trust each of the other provinces will send delegates to digest, and publish a plan of parliamentary reform, to pursue such measures as may appear to them most likely to render it effectual, to adjourn from time to time, and convene provincial meetings, if found necessary.

An address to the Volunteers of Munster, Connaught, and Leinster, accompanied this resolution, fraught with the loftiest sentiments in favor of liberty, alluding to the events of last year, merely as an incitement to go further, and pouring itself forth in that diffuse and impassioned eloquence, always imposing on men of warm tempers, on subjects with which they are little conversant, and exactly adapted to the ardent and precipitant master-spirits of that agitated period. Several subordinate resolutions were entered into. A proposition relative to the concession of the elective franchise to the Roman Catholics was brought forward; well intentioned, perhaps, but indiscreet, for though that measure was most wisely (as I shall ever think) adopted by Parliament ten years afterwards, it not only would not have met support from the Protestant part of the community in 1783, but any warm efforts in its favour must have only added to that flame, which already began to blaze with too much violence. Lord Charlemont's friends took the lead in the rejection of this proposition. It clearly indicates the limited space in which the convention moved. But more of this hereafter.

An extract from a letter of Mr. Burke to Lord Charlemont, though it does not allude to the convention, shows in some respect the sentiments of the ministers with whom he was connected, towards Ireland just at this time.—“ I see with concern that there are some remains of ferment in Ireland, though, I think, we have poured in to assuage it, almost all the oil in our stores. To my astonishment, I hear, that the very throwing out of a bill, in a common parliamentary form, because the renewal of it, by the carelessness of the bringer in, militated with the late ample grants to you in the colony trade, has been matter of offence to some people. On this it is impossible to say any thing. I am sorry for it. Ireland is an independent kingdom to all intents and purposes. But there are circumstances in the situation of all countries, that no claims made, or allowed, can alter. We cannot reclaim, and I really believe, no creature here wishes to reclaim, one iota of the concessions made. But you are too near us, not to be affected, more or less, with the state of things here. If you quarrel with the present ministry, it will embarrass them undoubtedly ; but then you may have those who do not wish so sincerely for making the prosperity of Ireland a very principal part of the bond of union between us. Instead of treaty, to begin with quarrel, about what may be thought fit to ask, is hardly the usage, even of those who are supposed in a sort of natural state of enmity. But I go beyond my mark. A little anxiety for the public in a very critical state, has induced me to exceed the limits prescribed to one who has little natural weight, and no official duty, that calls him to this particular affair, unless it becomes matter of parliamentary discussion.”

As the time for the meeting of the convention now drew near, the Lord Lieutenant and the Government were, and with reason, not at all at their ease, but most wisely forbore any hostility. Indeed, any thing of that sort would then have



been as inefficacious on their part, as the efforts of some of the best friends of the Volunteers were unavailing in checking their progress. Many of the delegates, however, who were chosen, in a good measure soothed the fears of Government. Lord Charlemont, Mr. Brownlow, and three other gentlemen of rank and consequence, were appointed from Armagh. Mr. Stewart from Tyrone. Several of known loyalty, and inimical to all anarchy, were nominated. Others, indeed, of very dissimilar principles, procured seats in the convention. The county of Derry appointed four respectable members, with whom they associated their Bishop, Frederick, Earl of Bristol. If this work should chance to survive the present day, those who come after us may not be incurious to learn something, however slight, of that singular man. He was the son of Lord Hervey, so generally, but so imperfectly known, by the malign antithesis, and epigrammatic lines of Pope. His mother, Lady Hervey, was also the subject of that poet's muse; but his muse when playful and in good humour. Two noblemen of very distinguished talents, the Earls of Chesterfield and Bath, have also celebrated her in a most witty and popular ballad. Lord Bristol was a man of considerable parts, but far more brilliant than solid. His family was indeed famous for talents, equally so for eccentricity; and the eccentricity of the whole race shone out, and seemed to be concentrated in him. In one respect, he was not unlike Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, "Every thing by starts, and nothing long." Generous, but uncertain; splendid, but fantastical; an admirer of the fine arts, without any just selection; engaging, often licentious in conversation; extremely polite, extremely violent: it is indubitably true, that amidst all his erratic course, his bounty was not seldom directed to the most proper and deserving objects. His distribution of church livings, chiefly, as I have been informed, among the older and respectable clergy in his own diocese,

must always be mentioned with that warm approbation which it is justly entitled to. It is said, (how truly I know not) that he had applied for the Bishopric of Durham, afterwards for the Lieutenancy of Ireland; was refused both, and *hinc illæ lacrymæ*, hence his opposition. But the inequality, the irregular flow of his mind, at every period of his life, sufficiently illustrate his conduct, at this peculiar and momentous period.—Such, however, was this illustrious prelate, who, notwithstanding he scarcely ever attended Parliament, and spent most of his time in Italy, was now called upon to correct the abuses of Parliament, and direct the vessel of state in that course, where statesmen of the most experience, and persons of the calmest judgment, have had the misfortune totally to fail.—His progress from his diocese to the Metropolis, and his entrance into it, were perfectly correspondent to the rest of his conduct. Through every town on the road he seemed to court, and was received, with all warlike honours; and I remember seeing him pass by the Parliament House in Dublin, (Lords and Commons were then both sitting) escorted by a body of dragoons, full of spirits and talk, apparently enjoying the eager gaze of the surrounding multitude, and displaying altogether, the self-complacency of a favourite Marshal of France, on his way to Versailles, rather than the grave deportment of a Prelate of the church of England.

The convention met in Dublin, at the Royal Exchange, when, as preparatory, to every thing else, they chose Lord Charlemont their President. “The same reason,” says his Lordship, “which had induced me to accept the nomination from Armagh, and to persuade many moderate friends of mine, much against their wishes, to suffer themselves to be delegated, namely, that there should be in the assembly, a strength of prudent men sufficient, by withstanding or preventing violence, to secure moderate measures, induced me now to accept the troublesome and dangerous office of Presi-

dent which was unanimously voted to me. Another reason also concurred to prevent my refusal. The Bishop of Derry had, I knew, done all in his power to be elected to that office, and I feared that, if I should refuse, the choice might fall on him, which would indeed have been fatal to the public repose." The delegates being very numerous, the place of meeting was altered from the Exchange, the rooms of which were too small, to the Rotunda, in Rutland-Square. Lord Charlemont, as President, led the way, accompanied by a squadron of horse; then followed the delegates, who walked two and two, and formed a procession altogether as novel as imposing.

The convention now sat in form, and presented according to Lord Charlemont, "a numerous, and truly respectable body of gentlemen. For, though some of a lower class had been delegated, by far the majority were men of rank and fortune, and many of them Members of Parliament, Lords and Commoners; a circumstance which may be in some degree attributed to my endeavours. For, though I never cordially approved of the meeting, yet, as I found it impossible to withstand the general impulse towards it, and, as for reasons already assigned, I did not chuse to exert my against it, especially as there was cause to fear my exertions would be fruitless, and if so, might prevent my being useful towards moderating and guiding those measures which I could not with efficacy oppose, & directing that torrent which might otherwise have swept down all before it, I had, upon mature consideration, determined that to render the assembly as respectable as possible, was the next best mode to the entire prevention of it; and this, not only for the sake of public tranquillity, but the measure also which it meant to forward."

Such were the well-meant efforts of Lord Charlemont. But when the convention proceeded to business, it was soon found, that his moderation and good sense, aided by the most



respectable in that convention, would too often prove altogether inefficient. Though Mr. Brownlow, a wise man, and carrying with him that authority which wisdom and integrity, supported by large possessions, will very generally command, was chairman of the committee, into which the convention resolved itself: though other gentlemen, the most respectable, formed the sub-committee, whose business it was to receive plans of reform, the violent, untutored, and unprincipled, sometimes prevailed, and carried resolutions, totally contrary to the wishes of the president, or chairman.

A singular scene was soon displayed, and yet, such a scene as any one, who considered the almost unvarying disposition of an assembly of that nature, and the particular object for which it was convened, might justly have expected. From every quarter, and from every speculatist, great clerks, or no clerks at all, was poured in such a multiplicity of plans of reform, some of them ingenious, some which bespoke an exercised and rational mind, but, in general, as I have been well assured, so utterly impracticable, "So rugged and so wild in their attire," they looked not like "the offspring of inhabitants of the earth, and yet were on it;" that language would sink in portraying this motley band of incongruous fancies, of mis-shapen theories, valuable only if inefficient, or execrable, if efficacious. All this daily issued from presumptuous empirics, or the vainly busy minds of some political philanthropists, whom the good breeding alone of their countrymen permitted to be regarded as not totally out of their senses. The committee shewed a perseverance almost marvellous, but the murky conceits, and solemn vanities of such pretenders would have put even the patience of the man of Uz to flight. At last, after being for several days bewildered in this palpable obscure of politics, and more and more theories fitting round the heads of the unfortunate committee, that which must for ever take place on such occasions, took place

here. A dictator was appointed, not indeed in name, but substance. The Bishop of Derry moved, that Mr. Henry Flood, who had not been one of the committee, should be nominated, as an assessor, or joint member. And here was displayed the potency of oratorical talents in such a body of men, and the justice of Lord Bolingbroke's observation, that the House of Commons, or in short, any assembly partaking of the nature of the House of Commons, is like a pack of hounds. They will always follow the man who shews them most game. So rapid and decisive was the superiority which Flood obtained, that, without his concurrence, nothing was approved of. The Bishop now, as has been often experienced, found himself undone by his auxiliary. All his hopes of pre-eminence in the convention, and elsewhere, rested on his ill-timed support of the elective franchise, as a measure then, and at once, to be conceded to the Catholics. The grossest adulation would blush to say, that this support arose from superior discernment, or superior benevolence. His family had always cultivated Whig principles, and however the necessity of "The descendants of the Princess Sophia being Protestants," might have formed an article of his political creed, as well as that of his predecessor's, yet, when we consider his volatility, his long residence on the Banks of the Tiber, and general society there, we may justly conclude that, at any period of our history, *Troas*, *Tyrinus*, Catholic or Protestant Electors, or Statesmen, would have been objects of the most entire indifference to him. They, in truth, were so, and his propositions, as to the Catholics, though dignified by his adherents, with the terms of highly philosophical, were resisted by Flood, with that gentleman's usual success. This rejection of the Catholic, brought forward various plans of reform in favor of the Protestants, or the electors as they then stood. Flood's angry frown, and angry comments, exiled them all. Adieu to all the theories, phlegmatic, or airy, of the learned and the unlearned! They

were no more heard of. At last Mr. Flood produced his own plan for new modelling the House of Commons. It was unanimously adopted by the inferior, and then submitted to the grand committee, as it was called. A long debate arose. The difficulties under which the assembly labored in this great work of legislation were now apparent. Flood's plan, notwithstanding all his subtle interpretations and comments, was, on sober investigation, found not much superior to many which preceded it. Nay, there were some who, like Dangle in the play, thought that the interpreter was the hardest to be understood of any of his coadjutors. But, with all his plan's acknowledged imperfections, it was submitted to, as the best that could be patronized without putting the assembly to the blush, and, indeed, the state itself to the most imminent hazard.

A short scene was now acted, and, according to all the rules of criticism, in perfect unison with the former. Two or three lords and gentlemen, who possessed borough property, declared in the Convention, that any proper plan of reform should meet no obstacle from such possessions remaining in their hands. They would willingly relinquish them for the benefit of the people. Immediately after those gentlemen, who at that moment of enthusiasm were, I make no doubt, perfectly serious in what they said, and were capable of very generous derelictions, uprose several patriotic personages, and professing equal ardor in the public cause, made similar renunciations. Unfortunately, however, their pretensions to this invidious species of property were by no means so unequivocal. Some of those boroughs which they were pleased to call exclusively their own, presented only very debateable ground, and were in general known to those gentlemen, merely by the long sufferings which they sustained for even a dubious and transitory interest in them. To abandon such boroughs altogether would, at any time, be consummate



prudence. To immolate a set of voters, periodically corrupt, or law agents perpetually rapacious, would be most laudable, if a convention or reform had never been heard of. "Upon such sacrifices, the Gods themselves would," I think, "throw incense;" could they have really been made. Yet, with no other offerings to lay on the altar of public freedom, than what might justly be termed their own personal embarrassments, and molestations, did those gentlemen rise, one after the other, and, with the most untired gravity, nobly bestow on the people their untenable claims, and unsound interests. But they seemed resolved, on that day, that every proceeding in the Convention, should be almost ideal, and visionary plans of reform were followed by imaginary proscriptions of family electors.

Those shadows have passed over the scene in very solemn and ridiculous order, the eyes of the spectators were at length tired of such mock-heroic visions, and all turned towards Lord Charlemont. An enemy to ostentation, and always averse to public speaking, he had hitherto remained silent. But he found it necessary now to say something. "My determination," said his Lordship "to sacrifice to the public that borough, which I have ever held in trust for the people, was, I thought, sufficiently declared, by my acceptance of a seat at this meeting. That trust I have at all times endeavoured to execute to the public advantage; and I can assure this assembly, that I have never felt so much real satisfaction in the exercise of those powers, which, as a trustee for the people, have been confided to me, as I now do, in resigning them." The convention, and, indeed, all his auditory, were to the utmost gratified by this declaration, and applauded it as the language of sincerity and true patriotism. Flood's plan of reform having now passed the ordeal of the two committees, was finally reported to the convention, where the Bishop of Derry again brought forward his proposal in favor

of the Catholics, and was supported by several of the delegates. Lord Charlemont and his friends opposed him strenuously, and again left him in a minority. The point was warmly discussed. These repeated differences did not contribute much to the establishment of any cordial amity between the noble Prelate and the Earl. The former, one day whilst the convention was employed on something unimportant, ventured to hint to Lord Charlemont, as they sat for some minutes apart together, "That his conduct was by no means generally approved of," (alluding, it is presumed, to the Catholic business) "and that he was considered as rather lukewarm in favor of a reform." To this suggestion Lord Charlemont replied, as may be imagined, with some warmth. A short and somewhat unpleasant conversation took place, not at all necessary now to detail, but which closed with these words of Lord Charlemont. "The difference which I make between the present and the former objects of our exertions is this:—whilst Ireland was in effect subject to a foreign legislature, there were no lengths I would not have gone to rescue her from a state, which I considered as positive slavery. To that point I had pledged my life and fortune, and towards the attainment of it, I would willingly and cheerfully have hazarded not only them, but what was, and still is more dear to me, and far more important, the peace of my country. Our present object I esteem great; and of high importance, and to obtain it, I will do every thing not inconsistent with the public peace. But I will go no further. Make what use of this you please." The convention proceeded to business, and the Bishop withdrew.

After three weeks sitting, the labours of the convention seemed to draw towards an end. Lord Charlemont's health had suffered much from so close a confinement, and he looked with pleasure at the moment, when he could resume his daily exercise, and literary occupations. That moment did not

arrive as soon as he expected. The commencement of the convention was inauspicious, but the conclusion was agitating and eventful beyond any period in its history.—It is not to be forgotten, that Parliament had met the end of October, and was at this time actually sitting. To the astonishment of Lord Charlemont, Flood arose in the convention, about four o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, November 29th, and proposed, that he, accompanied by such Members of Parliament, as were then present, should immediately go down to the House of Commons, and move for leave to bring in a bill, exactly correspondent in every respect, to the plan of reform which he had submitted to, and was approved of by the convention. To this proposition he added another, “That the convention should not adjourn till the fate of his motion was ascertained.” A more complete designation, and avowal of a deliberative assembly coexisting with Lords and Commons, and, apparently, of co-extensive authority, could scarcely be made. It was, in truth, like bringing up a bill from the bar of one House of Parliament to that of another. Both motions were acceded to. The impropriety, the imprudence of such a step, was deeply felt by Lord Charlemont. That the gentlemen who adopted Mr. Flood’s proposition did not see it in this light, or seeing its real complexion, did not abandon it, may be partly attributed to the ascendancy which Flood had, at this time, obtained over most of them, as well as to that extreme ardor, which, pursuing a favoured object, overlooks or contemns all obstacles. Lord Charlemont had received a hint of this extraordinary movement from Flood, but it was no more than a hint; and on his remonstrating against it, that gentleman seemed to have abandoned it. Nor would he perhaps have brought it forward at all, certainly not then, had he not been impelled by particular personal motives. His great ambition was to take the lead in this business of reform; and as he at that time looked to a seat in the British House of



Commons, (which he soon after obtained,) his views would, as he imagined, be most powerfully aided by his splendid exertions in the convention, as well as the Irish Parliament, and enable him to aspire to superior rank and authority among the reformists in England, as well as those of Ireland. The time however pressed, and he was obliged to go to London in a very few days. To relinquish the honour of moving the question of reform to any one, he could not think of, and the eagerness of some delegates, co-operating with his own personal convenience, he hurried it into the House of Commons. Thus is there a secret history in all the public transactions, and that history not always the most brilliant.

Parliament now became the theatre of popular exertion. Whoever was present in the House of Commons on the night of the 29th of November 1782, cannot easily forget what passed there. I do not use any disproportionate language, when I say, that the scene was almost terrific. Several of the minority, and all the delegates, who had come from the convention, were in the uniforms, and bore the aspect of stern hostility. On the other hand, administration being supported on this occasion by many independent gentlemen, and having at their head very able men, such as Mr. Yelverton, and Mr. Daly, presented a body of strength not always seen in the ministerial ranks, looked defiance to their opponents, and indeed seemed almost unassailable. They stood certainly on a most advantageous ground, and that ground given to them by their adversaries. Mr. Flood, flushed with his recent triumphs in another place, and, enjoying the lofty situation which his abilities always placed him in, fearlessly led on the attack. Mr. Yelverton answered him with great animation, great strength of argument, and concluded with a generous, dignified appeal to the Volunteers, whom he applauded for every part of their conduct, the present alone excepted. Some speeches followed in a similar tone, but the minds of men soon became too heated

to permit any regular debate whatever. It was uproar, it was clamour, violent menace, and furious recrimination! If ever a popular assembly wore the appearance of a wild and tumultuous ocean, it was on this occasion; at certain, and those very short, intervals, there was something like a calm, when the dignity of Parliament, the necessity of supporting the Constitution, and danger of any military assembly, were feelingly and justly expatiated on. The sad state of the representation was, with equal truth, depicted on the other side. A denial of volunteer interference, and the necessity of amending the representation, whether volunteers existed or not, was, in the first instance, made with very imperfect sincerity, and in the latter with genuine candor. To this again succeeded tumult and confusion, mingled with the sad and angry voices of many who, allied to boroughs, railed at the Volunteers, like slaves, not gentlemen, and pretended to uphold the Constitution, whilst they were, in truth appalled at the light that now began, as their terror suggested, to pervade their ancient and ambiguous property. But the imprudence of the Volunteers was of more service to such men than all their array of servile hostility; on that night, at least, it proved their best safeguard, and placed them not within the shadowy, uncertain confines of a depopulated borough, where they could find no safety, but under the walls of the Constitution itself. The tempest, (for towards morning debate there was almost none) at last ceased; the question was put, and carried, of course, in favor of government, their numbers 159, and those of the opposition, 77. This was followed, and wisely too, by a resolution, "declaratory of the fixed determination of the House to maintain its privileges and just rights against any encroachments whatever; and that it was then indispensably necessary to make such a declaration." An Address to be carried up to the Throne, as the joint Address of Lords and Commons, was then moved for, in which,

after expressing their perfect satisfaction in his Majesty's government, they declared their determined resolution to support that Government, and the Constitution, with their lives and fortunes. This Address was carried to the Lords, and immediately agreed to.

We must now go back to the convention.—After sitting two hours, or more, and receiving no intelligence from Mr. Flood, Lord Charlemont, suspecting that which had now taken place, and dreading lest the delegates, who, to make use of his own phrase, had put themselves clearly in the wrong, might plunge still deeper in error; if they continued, at that time, to sit any longer, prevailed on them to adjourn to the Monday following. All his address was required to carry this point, and no other person would, at that time, have, perhaps, succeeded. The next day (Sunday) there was a large meeting at Charlemont House, of his particular friends, who unanimously agreed, that the public peace, should be the first object of their attention. Messages were received from several delegates, of whom Lord Charlemont had scarcely any personal knowledge, that they were ready to follow him in any measure he should propose. On Monday morning he took the chair at an earlier hour than usual, at the convention.—A gloomy, sullen taciturnity prevailed for some time; at length a delegate arose, and began to inveigh against the House of Commons. This was exactly what Lord Charlemont expected, and, at all hazards, resolved to put an end to. He immediately arose, called the delegate to order, and said, "That one of the wisest usages in Parliament was, never to take notice in one House of what was said in another. The observance of such a rule, he then begged particularly to recommend to the convention." The propriety of this speech was instantaneously felt; and, though many subsequent efforts were made, tending to misrule and anarchy, such was the respect paid to Lord Charlemont, that the utmost tranquillity prevailed. To in-



sure that tranquillity, it was absolutely necessary to convince the delegates, that, notwithstanding what had passed in Parliament, the original object of their meeting should in no wise be departed from, and that a Parliamentary Reform should be as sedulously attended to, though in a different form, as it had been before. Lord Charlemont's plan, at the original meeting of the convention, was, to prevent the most remote intercourse between Parliament and that assembly. That the delegates, the convention being previously dissolved, should lay the scheme of reform, which seemed to be most approved of, before their county meetings, regularly convened; and if that, or any other scheme, should be particularly regarded, then, to recommend such measure to their representatives, and petition Parliament on the subject. This plan effectually guarded against any direct conflict, at least, between Parliament and the convention; and though, in fact, its military origin could not be altogether denied, if the scheme of that Assembly was alone proposed, yet it was so soon to be clothed in the garb of the Constitution alone, by being laid before the people, and by them again, through the medium of their representatives, before Parliament, that it was almost above exception, and perhaps the best that, in such a peculiar situation as matters then stood, could be devised. But Flood's genius, as we have seen, prevailed. On the present day of meeting, it was absolutely incumbent not to suffer the convention to depart without keeping some plan of reform still before their eyes; without this the delegates would not have been pacified, nor indeed could it be expected. The following resolutions were, therefore, proposed, and most warmly and unanimously adopted;

Resolved unanimously.—That it is highly necessary for the delegates of counties, cities, and towns, in conjunction with the other freeholders of their several counties, to forward the plan of reform agreed to by this Convention, by convening

county meetings, or whatever other constitutional mode they may find most expedient; and that they not only instruct their representatives to support the same in Parliament, but also request the members of the several cities, towns, boroughs, and manors, within their county, to aid in carrying the same into effect.

Resolved unanimously.—That the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform is manifest, and that we do exhort the nation, by every constitutional effort, to effectuate such Reform.

But the business did not close here. To the severe, yet gentleman-like reprehension, which many respectable members of the House of Commons considered themselves as justified by the occasion to use towards the Volunteers, had been added many, and most intemperate, expressions against them by others, not the wisest or best part of the House. An Address to the King, was, therefore, resolved on; a protestation of their loyalty to their Sovereign, and attachment to Great Britain, being regarded as the most dignified replication that could be made. The Address was conceived in very dutiful terms, and concluded with these words;—And to implore your Majesty, that our humble wish to have certain manifest perversions of the Parliamentary Representation of this Kingdom remedied by the Legislature in some reasonable degree, may not be imputed to any spirit of innovation in us, but to a sober and laudable desire to uphold the Constitution, to confirm the satisfaction of our fellow subjects, and to perpetuate the cordial union of both kingdoms.” Lord Charlemont, fully aware of the evil consequences that might ensue from the continuance of such an assembly in the metropolis, under the circumstances it was now placed, most wisely insisted, that no other business should be proceeded on, and the Convention finally adjourned.

Thus closed this celebrated meeting, which there is every reason to wish had never been convened. To deviate from

candor, would ill accord with the venerable name which can alone, perhaps, give any thing like permanency to these memoirs, and an adherence to truth, is the great duty of any historian, to which all other considerations must necessarily yield. From the personal characters of the leading delegates, nothing dangerous to the state was to be apprehended. But the very reasons which most of them assigned for accepting such a situation, proved, more than any thing else could, the irregularity and impropriety of the meeting. They consented to be chosen, in order to prevent mischief. What could any rational man expect from an assembly which, in its very formation, carried with it the seeds of civil confusion?—Happily for Ireland, Lord Charlemont, and men like him, prevented such seeds from coming to maturity. Yet, with all their influence, they were in some instances, obliged to give way. To put a stop originally to any convention whatever, was beyond their power. The increase, the success of the volunteers, stimulated them to pass the line of sound discretion, and they would have formed a convention, though their loved general had openly declared himself totally inimical to it. Many acted, unquestionably, from the purest motives; others from perfect good wishes to the state, mingled with no small attention to their own family interests; and the volunteers, in one particular district, were brought forward, unknowingly, to aid those interests and the common cause at the same time. They were called forth, too, at this particular period, because those who knew them best, were perfectly sensible that their intervention, would otherwise be too late, or that they could not be collected at all; the institution being, in that district, and some other places, even then rather on the decline. This may surprize many readers, but the fact was indubitably so. There were also some who entered into the convention, for the purposes of mischief. The popular interest altogether predominated, and when the convention sat, the mass of the



delegates acted as assemblies, merely popular, ever will act. They wandered over a multiplicity of objects, sometimes as reason, sometimes as caprice dictated; liberal in sentiment, arbitrary in conduct, till a man of superior abilities (Flood) arose and for a time ruled them with absolute sway. So closely do the confines of multitudinous and personal despotism touch each other, and so certain is it, that, when the people seem to govern with almost uncontrolled authority, do they most approximate to the solitary rule of an individual. How did this assembly act? At its very onset it claimed an authority not at all inferior to that of the legislature, (the common phrase was, that the convention was the true Parliament,) and at its conclusion, it rushed forward with propositions for the instant adoption of the House of Commons. Had such an intervention been in the slightest degree successful, it is evident, to any thinking person, that the remedy would have been infinitely worse than the disease. Such a victory over the House of Commons, could not have terminated there, for neither the volunteers, nor the people, would have been satisfied with it. They might have said that they would, and at the moment been sincere in such a declaration, but moderation and victory do not often accompany each other, and as seldom at least, in civic contests, as military hostility. The demagogues of that day, would not have followed the chariot wheels of the members of a convention, as the monitory attendant of the conqueror in a Roman triumph, to recal him to himself, to control his pride, and mitigate his presumption; but they would have followed for the purposes of applauding their temerity, and extending their dominion. They would have taken care to tell them how near they were in their visitation to the House of Commons, to that of the Lords; and that they would do nothing if they did not dislodge some of the Bishops at least, or go a little further at once, and erect the standard of the convention, on the ruins of episcopacy and aristocracy. To

all such enlarged notions, or benevolent hints, of what an armed, successful convention might, or ought to do, the assembly of which I now treat would not, perhaps, have immediately listened; at least, all the good and wise who sat there, would not; and I believe it is as certain that, in such a case, an equal portion of popular hatred would have attended the reformers, and the reformed; the Convention, as well as the House of Commons. Another Convention would have arisen, or a secession from the old one taken place, and confusion would have been worse confounded.

That conventions may be necessary, no one but a slave can deny. The history of the Revolution has proved it; but a repetition, or too frequent recurrence of such assemblies, may be dreaded, even by the most strenuous advocates for popular privilege; for the collective power of the people, by being brought in that manner perpetually into action, will naturally exhaust itself; it will lose all its fire, and cease to have that just, but regulated, control over the democratic part of the legislature, which the genius and spirit of the constitution most certainly invested it with. In truth, all liberty would be ultimately destroyed; for, if there is danger to be apprehended from any assembly, not strictly known to the constitution, with whatever portion of the property, integrity, and wisdom of the country that assembly may be connected, there is, on the other hand, much, very much, to be dreaded from the unprincipled, obsequious servants of power, who, with the ardor of low cunning, catch at the slightest errors of generous minds, and are enamored with any irregularity of freedom, as, sooner or later, it enables them to give some wound to liberty itself. —What then, it may be asked, is to be done?—*Nec Deus interit*, is as sound a precept, in the formation of such assemblies, as the construction of poetic machinery. Let them never be brought together, if the general sentiment does not, beyond all contradiction, loudly, yet gravely, and not unfre-

quently, proclaim, that the existence of the nation itself demands their interference. "The power of impeachment," said Lord Somers, once in the House of Commons, "should be like Goliath's sword, kept in the temple, and not used but on great occasions." The same may be said of conventions.

The reader who may not remember the days of this military convention will be naturally anxious to enquire, what sensation its adjournment, or rather indeed its downfall, excited? To the best of my recollection, little, or none whatever. This indifference can be accounted for;—its basis, from circumstances at that time, perhaps, insuperable, was altogether too narrow; the delegates did not, nor could they then include the Catholic body; yet, to talk of extending the right of suffrage wherever property was to be met with, and, at the same time, shut out the majority of the nation, was a strange contradiction. That the Catholics, therefore, should lament the extinction of an assembly, which, whilst it proposed to erect a temple of general freedom, could not bring them even within the vestibule, was not at all to be expected. There were other reasons which had their influence on all thinking men, who stood aloof from the House of Commons as well as the Convention, and regarded the proceedings of both impartially.

This Convention was, independent of its military origin, which alone was sufficient to condemn it, the least justifiable of any convention that ever sat in Ireland. It thought proper to meet, not only immediately after the Revolution of 1782, but directly, at the same time, with a new Parliament, whose character, or whose temper, on any subject, had not been tried at all; and superadded to that, the particular subject for the promotion of which the Convention now met, (a Parliamentary Reform,) had never, as a question of debate, been entertained by any House of Commons whatever in Ireland. So that here was a Revolution, a new Parliament treading on the heels of



that Revolution, and a subject, totally novel, to be taken up by that Parliament. . . But, without having the patience to see what influence that Revolution would have on a new Parliament, or how far it might affect such a popular question particularly ; and of course, having no possible pretext to say, that the petitions of the people were disregarded as to that point, (none indeed had been presented,) the convention came instantly to a conflict with Parliament. The consequences were such as might be expected. Parliament stood on such vantage ground, that the convention instantly broke down.

Some considerations may also be added to the above, which made much impression on part of the community, and must be enlarged on here. If it is necessary to animadvert, not unfrequently, on the misconduct of ministers, it is necessary also to take notice of the faults of the people. Despicable is that man, who, to sooth their ear, dwells with a malign and vulgar satisfaction on the errors of their rulers, and never touches on their own. In August, 1783, that is, three months before the meeting of the convention in Dublin, the Parliament was dissolved, and a new one summoned to meet. Here, then, were the people called forth to act their part in the choice of new representatives. If it be sullenly said, that the system of representation circumscribed the popular choice in too narrow limits, I accede to the proposition ; but I beg to add, that it was not so bound in as to prevent its coming forth at all ; and it did not come forth. Numerous as the boroughs were, still they did not overspread the entire field of elections ; the counties and several free towns remained ; yet most certain is it, that not one county, not one free town, or corporation, throughout the kingdom, expressed their own or the people's gratitude, by electing any one of the eminent men who had so recently, and so gloriously, led them on to the best victory, the triumph of rational freedom. Nay, some country gentlemen, who had, in the late contest, acted a

part the most independent, were thrown out. Let it be remembered too, that, some portions of the country had divided themselves into two parties. One was for simple repeal, as already stated; the other, for renunciation by Act of Parliament; and, according to the usual acerbity which distinguishes very unimportant feuds of mankind, they began to hate each other with almost as perfect cordiality as they hated the usurpations of the British Parliament. It might therefore be expected, by those who know what mankind really is, that party division would effectuate that which public spirit had neglected to do; and, as Mr. Flood was the renowned leader of one party, some place might be found where that party predominated, which would return him to Parliament with an air of superior gratitude and resplendent patriotism; in other words, with great apparent magnanimity, and much interior spite. No. Party was loquacious and venomous, and displayed itself in every shape, and every place, except where it should have most displayed itself, at the moment, that is, on the public Hustings.

Mr. Flood, and his illustrious rival, were obliged to wander, as far as elections extended, through this mist of popular oblivion, and find their way to Parliament in any manner they could. The Borough of Charlemont once more silently received Mr. Grattan, and Mr. Flood, had great difficulty in finding any seat whatever. At this very moment were demagogues rushing forth from every corner in quest of a parliamentary reform, vociferating that the people could not elect a single friend of their's, and dissatisfied with all that had been done in both Parliaments, unless they could give a freer and more expanded utterance to the voice of the constituent, which voice, when called upon by the Constitution itself to speak, was, as to the chief upholders of that Constitution, no where to be heard. The inconsistency, the unreasonableness of such proceedings certainly disinclined many to the conven-

tion, and they beheld its abrupt dissolution, not merely with unconcern, but satisfaction. It is proper to record such things. No people ever yet existed, of warmer hearts, and more lively gratitude, than the Irish. But the public here, as elsewhere, has its levity, its days, its months, of idle, arbitrary domination. And of all unreasonable expectations, what can be more so, than that the person who has embarked solely in their service, should proceed in his course, with either energy or efficacy, under the chill of their neglect, or the miserable uncertainty of their frowns or their smiles? The philosophic representative who knows what the people, the "fond many," have been, in all ages, may continue to serve them, unmoved by their clamours; but he who engages in public life, with equal purity of mind at first, but less firm purpose, will only encounter similar discouragements for a stated period; he will not wait for a return of their good humour. He is assailed, not so much by the minister, or avidity of increased income, as the suggestions of a wounded mind, of self-love, which tells him, that he may be more useful to his country in a ministerial, than popular connexion. At length, he abandons comparative poverty, caprice, and the crowd, for affluence, constancy, and the court. This is not the course of heroism, but how little heroism is, in truth, to be met with; and if that little find not its natural reward in the sunshine of the people's general attachment, what right have the people to complain? With a few sentences more I shall close the subject of the convention. It has led me further than I intended; but a sincere wish to guard my countrymen against the blandishments of every specious novelty must be my apology. They may rest assured, that the established forms of the Constitution embrace almost every possible mode of redress of public grievances; and that, impatiently to seek a new path, in quest of that which can certainly, though slowly perhaps, be obtained, by pursuing the old parliamentary road, may dazzle their imaginations,



and even recreate their minds for a moment, but will only terminate in darkness and confusion. It has been said, that the majority which resisted Mr. Flood's motion was composed of the usual Swiss of the Castle, and the entire array of the borough-holders. But it was not so. The friends of one, or, I believe, two or three noblemen who had boroughs, voted with Mr. Flood. In the majority were many gentlemen totally unconnected with administration; who, on other occasions, voted against Lord Northington; and were unequivocally friends to the measure of a parliamentary reform, but objected to the bill then moved for, as originating from an armed assembly. When Mr. Flood said, in the House of Commons, that his sentiments in favour of that bill were his own, and not borrowed elsewhere, Mr. D. Daly quickly and justly replied; "I do not say, that they are not his own, but they are more notoriously the sentiments of the Convention." Being such, they form the entire justification of the House of Commons in refusing leave even to bring in the bill; for, unless some peculiar, and extraordinary circumstances imperiously demand such a negative, *in limine*, the House never adopts it. Their decision was as judicious as spirited. Had it acted otherwise, the reform then urged might have been called a parliamentary, but its only proper denomination would have been a military reform; and what that is, had former ages been as silent as they are instructive on the subject, the dread series of events which have taken place, since the days of the Convention, has most fatally promulgated to the world. But, if the timid acquiescence of the House, in the decrees of the Convention, had then established a precedent for submission, and left to the Commons neither name nor authority of any sort, however we might for ever deplore its imbecility, we cannot on the other hand, applaud its almost continued resistance, during a variety of subsequent and tranquil periods, to the question of reform, when urged as consti-

tutionally as ably. That reform required indeed all the aid which the wisest, and best senators could give to it ; and had it been calmly, judiciously, and timely adopted, though it could not have averted every evil from this kingdom, the measure of our misfortunes would, in all probability have been much less, and our own legislature remained unterrified, and unimpaired.

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#### THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN.

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THE foregoing history of the struggles made by the Irish Volunteers and their most celebrated leaders to reform the Irish Parliament, we have taken from Mr. Hardy's "Memoirs of Lord Charlemont." We lament that this excellent biographer should have laboured so much to put into the shade those personages, who by the superior liberality of their political sentiments, would have achieved the great work of Parliamentary Reform. But Mr. Hardy himself was a member of the Irish Parliament, and could not at this period brook the idea of a participation of political power with his Catholic countrymen. Like his great and distinguished patron, Mr. Hardy surrendered his prejudices to the times in which he lived ; and was, in the evening of his political life, a zealous friend to the emancipation of the Catholic. The Bishop of Derry saw into futurity with a keener eye than most of his Protestant countrymen : he asserted the necessity of embracing the Catholic portion of Ireland, on the great principle of Reform, and foretold its defeat unless that principle was acted upon. Some have denied the justice and wisdom of his opinions.

We have now, however, seen the result of the struggles which the Protestants of Ireland made to reform their *Protestant* Parliament ;—we here behold the impotency of monopoly in its

most pitiable predicament. It will hereafter be matter of serious and melancholy reflection to the Irish Reader, that the most distinguished Volunteers of Ireland, men who in 1782 were examples of unbounded liberality to their Catholic countrymen, should in the year *succeeding* manifest such a stupid spirit of unrelenting bigotry. Had the Convention which assembled in the Royal Exchange of Dublin, in November, 1783, been so wise as to take the ground which the Bishop of Derry recommended to their adoption:—had they opened the arms of Protestantism, and embraced the population, or, in other words, the physical strength of their country,—had they enlisted the Catholic as well as the Protestant heart in the contest, posterity would not have to lament the destruction of those hopes with which Ireland so sanguinely flattered herself. In vain would the Attorney-General, Barry Yelverton, afterwards Chief Baron Avonmore, have hurled the thunders of his eloquence against the uncorrupted spirit of his country—in vain would the Convention have been assailed by the idle and silly sophistry that they were *dictators* rather than *petitioners* to the Irish Parliament, and should be put down.—*That* Parliament would, as it did in 1782, have obeyed the voice of an unanimous people, and Ireland would not, to-day, be a despicable, dishonoured province of England.—Our men of property and our men of genius, would be flourishing in their native land—objects of envy and admiration to surrounding nations. The energies, and industry, and talents of Ireland would have found a theatre of action calculated to complete their utmost developement.

The people of the North of Ireland, *saw* all this dismal perspective in the defeat of the Reformers, and their most distinguished men, at length sought for hope in the adoption of a plan of National Union which would consolidate into one harmonious whole all sects and denominations of their country.



Hence arose the celebrated society of United Irishmen\*, which, in its formation and progress and maturity excited the wonder and the reverence of Europe. Never was a system better calculated to promote its object—the union—happiness and strength of the country. Never was a plan so well constructed to obliterate from the recollection of Ireland the sufferings inflicted on her by a vicious and insidious policy ; or to procure by its powerful operation, the attainment of that union of sentiment throughout Ireland, which would demonstrate to England the wisdom of a mild and benevolent policy.

We shall now record some of those most distinguished documents which formed the groundwork of this great national confederacy ; and as Belfast was the source of this new political light which illuminated the most deserted extremities of Ireland, the reader will observe that the Society of United Irishmen constitute a most important part of the Politics of Belfast.

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\* This Society was composed of the most celebrated by their station in the community, the extent of their talents, and their learning, and their unwearied zeal in the cause of civil and religious freedom. Its original objects were pacific and conciliatory. It sought to procure an unanimity of sentiment which would command the attention of the Legislature ; but the violence of monopoly, and the more profound policy of Mr. Pitt, who saw the completion of the Union in the divisions and distraction of the Irish Nation, drove the Society of United Irishmen into the arms of a foreign power, and a plan originally conceived and acted upon to strengthen the country against its *foreign* as well as *domestic* enemies, became, in the hands of an exasperated party, an instrument of formidable co-operation with both. Mr. Pitt took advantage of the precipitancy of the Irish leaders, and raised his favorite measure of the Union, on the ruin of the Irish monopolist and the Irish patriot.

*Eustace-street, Dublin, 9th Nov. 1791.*

AT A MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF  
UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN,

THE HON. SIMON BUTLER, IN THE CHAIR.

*The following was agreed to :*

WHEN we reflect how often the Freemen and Freeholders of Dublin have been convened, humbly to express their grievances to parliament...how often they have solicited the enactment of good and the repeal of bad laws—how often, for successive years, they have petitioned against the obnoxious and unconstitutional Police Act, and how often all these applications have been treated with the most perfect contumacy and contempt.—When these facts are brought to recollection, is there an honest man will say, that the House of Commons have the smallest respect for the people, or believe themselves their legitimate representatives?—The fact is, that the great majority of that House, consider themselves as the representatives of their own money, or the hired servants of the English government, whose minister here, is appointed for the sole purpose of dealing out corruption to them—at the expense of Irish liberty, Irish commerce, and Irish Improvement.—This being the case, it naturally follows, that such minister is not only the representative of the English views against this country, but is also the sole representative of the people of Ireland. To elucidate which assertion, it is only necessary to ask, whether a single question in favor of this oppressed nation can be carried without *his* consent?—and whether any measure, however inimical, may not through *his* influence be effected?

In this state of abject slavery, no hope remains for us, but in the sincere and hearty *union of all the people*, for a complete and radical reform of parliament ; because it is obvious, that

one party alone have been ever unable to obtain a single blessing for their country ; and the policy of our rulers has been always such, as to keep the different sects at variance, in which they have been but too well seconded by our own folly.

For the attainment then of this great and important object—for the removal of absurd and ruinous distinctions—and for promoting a complete coalition of the people—a Society has been formed, composed of all religious persuasions, who have adopted for their name,—THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN,—and have taken as their

#### DECLARATION,

That of a similar Society in Belfast, which is as follows ;—

IN the present great æra of reform, when unjust governments are falling in every quarter of Europe ; when religious persecution is compelled to abjure her tyranny over conscience : when the rights of men are ascertained in theory, and that theory substantiated by practice ; when antiquity can no longer defend absurd and oppressive forms against the common sense and common interests of mankind ; when all government is acknowledged to originate from the people, and to be so far only obligatory as it protects their rights and promotes their welfare ; we think it our duty, as Irishmen, to come forward, and state what we feel to be our heavy grievance, and what we know to be its effectual remedy.

*We have no national government*—we are ruled by Englishmen, and the servants of Englishmen, whose object is the interest of another country, whose instrument is corruption, and whose strength is the weakness of Ireland ; and these men have the whole of the power and patronage of the country as means to seduce and subdue the honesty and the spirit of her representatives in the legislature.—Such an extrinsic power, acting with uniform force in a direction too frequently opposite to the true line of our obvious interests, can be resisted with effect solely by unanimity, decision and spirit in the



people,—qualities which may be exerted most legally, constitutionally and efficaciously, by that great measure essential to the prosperity and freedom of Ireland—*an equal representation of all the people in parliament.*

We do not here mention as grievances, the rejection of a place-bill,—of a pension-bill,—of a responsibility bill,—the sale of peerages in one house, the corruption publicly avowed in the other,—nor the notorious infamy of borough traffic between both;—not that we are insensible of their enormity, but that we consider them as but symptoms of that mortal disease which corrodes the vitals of our constitution, and leaves to the people, in their own government, but the shadow of a name.

Impressed with these sentiments, we have agreed to form an association, to be called “The Society of United Irishmen:” and we do pledge ourselves to our country, and mutually to each other, that we will steadily support, and endeavour by all due means to carry into effect the following resolutions :

I. Resolved, That the weight of English influence in the government of this country is so great, as to require a cordial union among *all the people of Ireland*, to maintain that balance which is essential to the preservation of our liberties and the extension of our commerce.

II. That the sole constitutional mode by which this influence can be opposed, is by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in parliament.

III. That no reform is practicable, efficacious, or just, which shall not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion.

Satisfied, as we are, that the intestine divisions among Irishmen have too often given encouragement and impunity to audacious and corrupt administrations, in measures which, but for these divisions, they durst not have attempted;

we submit our resolutions to the nation as the basis of our political faith.

We have gone to what we conceive to be the root of the evil; we have stated what we conceive to be the remedy. With a parliament thus reformed, every thing is easy; without it, nothing can be done: And we do call on and most earnestly exhort our countrymen in general to follow our example, and form similar societies in every quarter of the kingdom, for the promotion of constitutional knowledge, the abolition of bigotry in religion and politics, and the equal distribution of the rights of man through all sects and denominations of Irishmen. The people, when thus collected, will feel their own weight, and secure that power which theory has already admitted as their portion, and to which, if they be not aroused by their present provocations to vindicate it, they deserve to forfeit their pretensions for ever!

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#### TEST.

*I A. P. in the presence of God, do p'ledge myself to my country, that I will use all my abilities and influence in the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish Nation in Parliament.—And as a means of absolute and immediate necessity in the establishment of this Chief Good of Ireland, I will endeavour, as much as lies in my ability, to forward a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interests, a communion of rights, and an union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions; without which every reform in parliament must be partial, not national, inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this Country.*

Friday, 30th, December, 1791.

SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN.

*The Hon. SIMON BUTLER in the Chair.*

RESOLVED, UNANIMOUSLY, *That the following Circular Letter, reported by our Committee of Correspondence, be adopted and printed.*

THIS Letter is addressed to you from the Corresponding Committee of the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin.

We annex the declaration of political principles which we have subscribed, and the test which we have taken, as a social and sacred compact to bind us more closely together.

The object of this institution is to make an United Society of the Irish nation ; to make all Irishmen—Citizens ;—all Citizens—Irishmen ; nothing appearing to us more natural at all times, and at this crisis of Europe more seasonable, than that those who have common interests, and common enemies, who suffer common wrongs, and lay claim to common rights, should know each other and should act together. In our opinion ignorance has been the demon of discord, which has so long deprived Irishmen, not only of the blessings of well regulated government, but even the common benefits of civil society. Peace in this island has hitherto been a peace on the principles and with the consequences of civil war. For a century past there has indeed been tranquillity, but to most of our dear countrymen it has been the tranquillity of a dungeon ; and if the land has lately prospered, it has been owing to the goodness of Providence, and the strong efforts of human nature resisting and overcoming the malignant influence of a miserable administration.

To resist this influence, which rules by discord and embroils by system, it is vain to act as individuals or as parties ;—It becomes necessary by an union of minds, and a know-



ledge of each other, to will and to act as a nation. To know each other is to know ourselves—the weakness of one and the strength of many. Union, therefore, is power—it is wisdom—it must prove liberty.

Our design, therefore, in forming this Society, is to give an example, which, when well followed, must collect the public will, and concentrate the public power into one solid mass, the effect of which, once put in motion, must be rapid, momentous, and consequential.

In thus associating we have thought little about our ancestors—much of our posterity. Are we for ever to walk like beasts of prey, over fields which these ancestors stained with blood? In looking back, we see nothing on the one part but savage force succeeded by savage policy; on the other, an unfortunate nation “scattered and peeled, meted out and trodden down!” We see a mutual intolerance, and a common carnage of the first moral emotions of the heart, which lead us to esteem and place confidence in our fellow creatures. We see this, and are silent. But we gladly look forward to brighter prospects—to a people united in the fellowship of freedom—to a Parliament the express image of that people—to a prosperity established on civil, political, and religious liberty—to a peace—not the gloomy and precarious stillness of men brooding over their wrongs, but that stable tranquillity which rests on the rights of human nature, and leans on the arms by which these rights are to be maintained.

Our principal rule of conduct has been, to attend to those things in which we agree, to exclude from our thoughts those in which we differ. We agree in knowing what are our rights, and in daring to assert them. If the rights of men be duties to God, we are in this respect of one religion. Our creed of civil faith is the same. We agree in thinking that there is not an individual among our millions, whose happiness can be established on any foundation so rational and so

solid, as on the happiness of the whole community.—We agree, therefore, in the necessity of giving political value and station to the great majority of the people; and we think that whoever desires an amended constitution, without including the great body of the people, must on his own principles be convicted of political persecution, and political monopoly. If the present electors be themselves a morbid part of our constitution, where are we to recur for redress but to the whole community? “A more unjust and absurd constitution cannot be devised, than that which condemns the natives of a country to perpetual servitude, under the arbitrary dominion of strangers and slaves.”

We agree in thinking, that the first and most indispensable condition of the laws in a free state, is the assent of those whose obedience they require, and for whose benefit only they are designed. Without, therefore, an impartial and adequate representation of the community, we agree in declaring, We can have no constitution—no country—no Ireland. Without this, our late revolution we declare to be fallacious and ideal; a thing much talked of, but neither felt nor seen. The act of Irish Sovereignty has been merely tossed out of the English Houses into the Cabinet of the Minister; and nothing remains to the people, who of right are every thing, but a servile majesty and a ragged independence.

We call most earnestly on every great and good man, who at the late æra spoke or acted for his country, to consider less of what was done than of what there remains to do. We call upon their senatorial wisdom to consider the monstrous and immeasurable distance which separates, in this island, the ranks of social life, makes labour ineffectual, taxation unproductive, and divides the nation into petty despotism and public misery. We call upon their tutelar genius, to remember, that government is instituted to remedy, not to render more grievous the natural inequality of mankind, and that unless the

rights of the whole community be asserted, anarchy (we cannot call it government) must continue to prevail, where the strong tyrannize, the rich oppress, and the mass are brayed in a mortar. We call upon them, therefore, to build their arguments and their actions on the broad platform of general good.

Let not the rights of nature be enjoyed merely by connivance, and the rights of conscience merely by toleration. If you raise up a prone people, let it not be merely to their knees. Let the nation stand. Then will it cast away the bad habit of servitude, which has brought with it indolence, ignorance, an extinction of our faculties, an abandonment of our very nature. Then will every right obtained, every franchise exercised, prove a seed of sobriety, industry, and regard to character, and the manners of the people will be formed on the model of their free constitution.

This rapid exposition of our principles, our object, and our rule of conduct, must naturally suggest the wish of multiplying similar Societies, and the propriety of addressing such a desire to you. Is it necessary for us to request, that you will hold out your hand, and open your heart to your countryman, townsman and neighbour?—Can you form a hope for political redemption, and by political penalties, or civil excommunications, withhold the Rights of Nature from your Brother? We beseech you to rally all the friends of Liberty within your circle round a Society of this kind as a centre. Draw together your best and bravest thoughts, your best and bravest men. You will experience, as we have done, that these points of union will quickly attract numbers, while the assemblage of such societies, acting in concert, moving as one body, with one impulse and one direction, will, in no long time, become not parts of the nation, but the nation itself; speaking with its voice, expressing its will, resistless in its power. We again entreat you to look around for men fit to form those sta-



ble supports on which Ireland may rest the lever of liberty. If there be but ten, take those ten. If there be but two, take those two, and trust with confidence to the sincerity of your intention, the justice of your cause, and the support of your country.

Two objects interest the nation—a plan of representation—and the means of accomplishing it.—These societies will be a most powerful means. But a popular plan would itself be a means for its own accomplishment. We have, therefore, to request, that you will favor us with your ideas respecting the plan which appears to you most eligible and practicable, on the present more enlarged and liberal principles which actuate the people; at the same time giving your sentiments upon our national coalition, on the means of promoting it, and on the political state and disposition of the country or town where you reside. We know what resistance will be made to your patriotic efforts by those who triumph in the disunion and degradation of their country. The greater the necessity for reform, the greater probability will be the resistance. We know that there is much spirit that requires being brought into mass, as well as much massy body that must be refined into spirit. We have many enemies, and no enemy is contemptible. We do not despise the enemies of the union, the liberty and the peace of Ireland, but we are not of a nature, nor have we encouraged the habit of fearing any man, or any body of men, in an honest and honorable cause. In great undertakings like the present, we declare that we have found it always more difficult to attempt, than to accomplish. The people of Ireland must perform all that they wish, if they attempt all that they can.

## THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

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ONE of the most distinguishing events in the history of Belfast Politics, is the prominent and able part which its inhabitants took on the great question of Catholic Emancipation. Their decided and unequivocal determination to support the immediate and unconditional emancipation of their Catholic countrymen, reflects honour on the religion of the Presbyterian, —the strength of his understanding and the purity of his heart. The resolutions of the people of Belfast on the subject of Catholic Emancipation contributed in an eminent degree to dissipate the prejudices of Ireland—to influence the policy of the government of the day, and give increased confidence to the Catholics themselves. The successors of those men who distinguished themselves in the following debate, may turn with pride to the pages which record it; they may now assert the claims of their fathers to the character of sound and honest politicians, whose enlightened and benevolent policy would have embraced their Catholic countrymen—would have broken the chains which rendered them impotent in their native land, and would have made them partners with their Protestant countrymen in the great work of national salvation: a more fatal and unfortunate course was taken, and the degradation and humility of Ireland debased into a *province*, is the merited penalty of bigotry and prejudice.

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### TO THE PRINCIPAL INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF BELFAST.

GENTLEMEN,

As men, and as Irishmen, we have long lamented the degrading state of slavery and oppression in which the great majority of our countrymen, the Roman Catholics are held—nor have we lamented it in silence—we wish to see all dis-

inctions on account of religion abolished—all narrow, partial maxims of policy done away. We anxiously wish to see the day when every Irishman shall be a citizen—when Catholics and Protestants, equally interested in their country's welfare, possessing equal freedom and equal privileges, shall be cordially UNITED, and shall learn to look upon each other as brethren, the children of the same God, the natives of the same land—and when the only strife amongst them shall be—who shall serve their country best. These, gentlemen, are our sentiments, and these we are convinced are yours.

We, therefore, request a general meeting of the principal inhabitants at the town-house, on Saturday next, at noon, to consider of the propriety of a petition to Parliament, in favor of our Roman Catholic brethren.

We are, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servants,

|                     |                   |                     |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Robert Thompson,    | Thomas Neilson,   | Robert Getty,       |
| Thomas Sinclair,    | Thomas M'Donnell, | James Hyndman,      |
| Robert Simms,       | Robert Hunter,    | Robert Major,       |
| Gil. M'Ilveen, jun. | Thomas M'Cabe,    | Walter Crawford,    |
| Thomas Milliken,    | Wm. Martin,       | Samuel M'Murray,    |
| Samuel Neilson,     | James M'Cornick,  | Thomas Brown,       |
| Samuel M'Tier,      | James Luke,       | John Baakhead,      |
| Hugh M'Ilwain,      | James M'Kain,     | Isaac Patton,       |
| Wm. M'Cleery,       | Ham. Thompson,    | J. Campbell White,  |
| Wm. Tennent,        | Hugh Johnson,     | J. S. Ferguson,     |
| Wm. Magee,          | Christ. Strong,   | John Todd,          |
| Wm. Simms,          | George Wells,     | Richard M'Clelland, |
| Robert Calwell,     | James Stephenson, | John M'Connell,     |
| Hugh Montgomery,    | Samuel M'Clean,   | John M'Clean,       |
| John M'Donnell,     | John Graham,      | And. M'Clean,       |
| Henry Haslett,      | Wm. Bryson,       | Thomas Ash,         |
| David Bigger,       | John Tisdal,      | John Caldwell,      |
| John Haslett,       | Hugh Crawford,    |                     |

AT a Meeting of the BELFAST READING SOCIETY, January 27.  
1792, the following resolutions were unanimously agreed to:—



I. Resolved, That civil and religious liberty is the birth-right of every human being ; that Governments were formed to secure them in the possession of this right, and that states should be regulated so as to protect them in the exercise of it.

II. That doctrines of faith, and modes of worship can neither give nor take away the rights of men ; because opinion is not the object of government ; because the mode of expressing religious worship should be left to the judgment of God, and the decision of conscience ; and because persecution, however it be disguised, is destructive of the equality of men, and the most sacred laws of nature.

III. That while we rejoice with every virtuous and enlightened mind, at the rapid progress which these principles have lately made, and the illustrious events to which their happy influence have given birth—events, which are the proudest boast of human nature, and which will supply history with ornaments unknown to former ages ; it is with inexpressible regret that we behold their circumscribed operation in this our native land.

IV. That Ireland can never deserve the name of a free state, while a great majority of her inhabitants enjoy the rights of citizens in so partial a manner ; while they are totally governed by the will of others ; in a word, while they are unjustly excluded from all share in the making and the administration of the laws under which they live.

V. In fine, it is our most fervent wish, that the nation would call for their deliverance, with a voice so temperate as to excite no tumult, so affectionate as to conciliate the hearts of all, but so UNITED, and so POWERFUL as to carry conviction to every source of legislation.

Resolved, That the above resolutions be published in the Belfast Papers.

JAMES M'CORMICK, CHAIRMAN.

## BELFAST MEETING ON THE ROMAN CATHOLIC QUESTION.

*January 28, 1792.*

IN consequence of a requisition, signed by fifty-three inhabitants, for a meeting of this town, to consider of the propriety of a petition to Parliament, in behalf of the Roman Catholics of Ireland—the greatest assembly was held this day that we ever recollect here, if we except the celebration of the French Revolution, on the 14th of July last. As the numbers that appeared could not be accommodated in the Town-house, an adjournment took place from thence to the New Meeting-House, the galleries and ground floor of which, though very extensive, were much crowded.

The Rev. Sinclair Kelburn was called unanimously to the chair, in which situation he presided with the utmost propriety; and, by a knowledge of the rules observed in all regulated popular assemblies, he procured perfect order and regularity.

Mr. John Holmes, after a prefatory speech in favor of a liberation of the Roman Catholics, from the impolitic and ruinous system of penal laws, and from their other incapacities, moved for the appointment of a special committee, in order to draw up such a petition to Parliament as would probably produce an unanimous vote, and unite the whole inhabitants of this town in one general supplication in behalf of their brethren of the Catholic persuasion; and further, that it should be an instruction to that Committee to make the following words the prayer of the petition—the preamble and body of the petition to be modelled according to the spirit and meaning of the prayer:

“ We therefore pray, that the Legislature may be pleased to repeal, *from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances*

of the country, and the general welfare of the whole kingdom will permit,\* all penal and restrictive statutes at present in existence against the Roman Catholics of Ireland; and that they may thus be restored to the rank and consequence of citizens, in every particular."

Which motion was seconded by Dr. Haliday; but the first clause of it, for the appointment of a committee, was afterwards dropt.

Doctor White asked, if it was meant by the mover, to extend all privileges to Roman Catholics, as the paper just read seemed to be in some degree doubtful, from the manner in which it was worded on that point.

After some debate, the mover explained, that the repeal of the "restrictive statutes" was meant to apply to every species of present legal disabilities, even to that which deprives them of the elective and other franchises, inclusive;—these disabilities to be done away, not instantaneously, but gradually, from time to time, as the circumstances of the country may warrant.

Mr. Robert Thomson, in a deliberate and well connected speech, fraught with that sound knowledge and cool disquisition which distinguish him as a speaker, opposed the words of the motion. He expressed the very great regard he had for the respectable gentlemen who made and seconded the motion, and his regret in differing from either. He said his mind had been long made up on the present question. It was one to which he had paid considerable attention, and he was clearly of opinion that the Catholic body ought to be restored fully to all the rights of citizens—but as he knew several gentlemen differed from him, and as it had always

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\* That part of the prayer marked in *Italics*, shews what was afterwards expunged by a majority.



been his anxious wish to preserve unanimity in the town, and as he thought an application on the present subject would come with more weight if agreed to without a dissenting voice; he had taken the liberty to draw up a short petition, which he hoped would embrace the idea of every man in the house; and he hoped the gentleman who hesitated about granting all their rights to Catholics at once, would see that he had conceded considerably, in order to take away every ground of objection; with their leave he would read it.

*To the Right Honourable and Honourable, &c.*

The Humble Petition of, &c.

SHEWETH,

“That Petitioners have long lamented the state of degradation and slavery in which the great majorities of their countrymen, the Roman Catholics are held, by a multitude of laws, creating incapacities and inflicting penalties numerous and severe.

“That Petitioners conceive it not only unjust in its principle, but in its operation highly injurious to the trade, commerce and industry, and to the general prosperity of Ireland, that the great body of the people should longer continue to be thus aggrieved.

“Petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that this Honourable House may take into serious consideration the case of the Roman Catholics, and grant them relief.”

After many compliments to the Roman Catholics, and endeavouring to prove that they deserved and were capable of enjoying the blessings of liberty, as persons of their persuasion were those who obtained Magna Charta, and who obliged James, when in this kingdom, to give the royal assent to several bills of the first importance to the Constitution of Ireland—he entered into a particular enumeration of the grievances of this long insulted nation. He shewed the indispen-

sible necessity of an immediate reform in a house of nominal representatives, in which the voice of the people was seldom heard and seldomer attended to. A house held under English influence ; returned by venal boroughs, and no longer expressive of, or governed by, the public will. That measures, replete with every good to the land which it should represent, were daily proposed to it, and as often scouted in disdain ;—that the just wishes of the people were treated with contempt—and that without an union of its inhabitants no reform need ever be proposed, as none without it ever could be effected. He here seemed to glance at the several instances in the last and former sessions, of rejecting almost every good bill offered by the few who can be said to have actually constituents in our House of Commons ; the refusal of a place, pension, and responsibility bill ; the refusal of an enquiry into the sale of the peerage, and the purchase of seats in another house with the money which bought these honours ; the refusal of every bill for amending the representation ; and, in short, of every other which had for its object the regeneration of the constitution, now become, through the lapse of time, mutilated, infirm, and calculated by the corruption of the best principles to sap the vital spirit of free government. After inveighing with much and deserved severity against the vile trade of rotten boroughs, he remarked that even the virtue of Ireland in 1782, with an armed host at its back, might not have effected what was called a free constitution ; without the very support of those boroughmongers who enslave the land, and who added their force to that of the people, for the mere purpose of enhancing the value of their seats, which they buy and sell like any article of commerce. He entered largely into a detail of the deceptions practised by government to disunite the kingdom ; to separate the Protestant from the Catholic ; the Catholic from the Protestant Dissenter, whose religious principles it is well known are at least as tolerant as those of

any other sect, and whose political ones are those which have repeatedly drawn a worn-out constitution back to its first principles, particularly at the Revolution; shortly prior to which the sun of liberty had set apparently to rise no more. He told the assembly that it was a fact which had fallen within his own knowledge eight years ago, about the time of the volunteer convention, that for near a century past, when the Roman Catholics (then weighed down with the vilest restrictions, since in a considerable degree done away) applied to government for redress, that the common reply was an expression of willingness to grant them relief; but that no petition could be preferred in their behalf from the South, which would not be answered from the North; and that nothing could be conceded to their wishes by the governing powers without producing a general weakness of the kingdom, by risings or rebellions among the Presbyterians of the North. That this delusive trick was now past, and that we should therefore come forward and form an alliance of power and a community of interest with our Catholic brethren; as a concession to justice, and as the certain mean of effecting every good purpose which, without them, we have long sought for in vain. He concluded an address which the Editor regrets his not being able to follow through all its parts, by moving an expungement of the words affecting the time of the repeal of every penal and every restrictive statute; in order to declare a wish that the restoration of all the rights of Roman Catholics should be immediate and unlimited. With much emphasis he asked, to whom were we to submit the point of, "from time to time," when the Catholics were to be liberated? Was it to Lord Lieutenants and their Secretaries? Was it to Parliament, in which the voice of the People was raised in vain? After a variety of arguments, in which he drew too just a picture of the wretched state of this country, in consequence of our being totally deprived of an adequate represen-



tation, founded on innumerable instances of our being governed by an English influence, his motion was made for the expunging of the following words in the prayer of the petition proposed by Mr. Holmes—"from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country and the general welfare of the whole kingdom will permit."

Doctor White said, it is now necessary to go more at large into the subject, as it appears we are not likely to agree without doing so.

In discussing questions relative to constitutional government, it is necessary to lay down some principles, in which we shall all agree; to reason and draw conclusions from, and to take strict care that our conclusions or inferences may be legitimate; I therefore proceed to say that every man contributing by his ingenuity and industry to the well-being of any state, has a right to a voice in the government of his country; and as it would be impossible that each member of a state could be judiciously employed, as a legislator, that business must be transacted by delegation; he therefore is necessitated to unite with his district to chuse a representative.

If so far I am right, we cannot avoid concluding that no member of any state contributing by his labor, his learning, or his ingenuity, to the support and well being of his country, can equitably be debarred from a share in the legislation of his country, personally, or by a representative.

Whoever is deprived of this right, is certainly a slave in a political point of view, and cannot be said to possess any control over, or defence against, laws, by which his life, liberty, and property may be abridged or taken away.

If these opinions are founded, of which there is no doubt, it would seem extraordinary that a profession of any particular system of religion should be a sufficient pretext for exclusion from civil privileges; as if a conscientious discharge of a man's duty to God, (and conscientious must have been that of

the Catholics, as it is in the teeth of their temporal interest,) was a fit cause of exclusion from civil rights. I should be rather inclined to believe that it was the strongest inducement to believe he was highly qualified for the exercise of civil virtues.

It has been often alleged, and for a long time believed, that the profession of the Catholic religion, and a belief in its doctrines, were incompatible with good citizenship; many instances to the contrary may be quoted in the history of our own country; to the Catholics we are obliged for trial by jury, for the institution of parliaments, our right of popular impeachment, and for Magna Charta; and our Catholic neighbours of France have given us a luminous view of their capacity in forming a government eminently calculated for the establishment and preservation of civil right and equal liberty.

Historical records supply us with innumerable facts, shewing in the clearest manner, that the profession of the Roman Catholic religion was by no means incompatible with the duties of a good legislator. A Roman Catholic Parliament, in the reign of Henry IV., 1399, thought it necessary to pass a particular act against the Pope's bull ratifying the statutes of Shrewsbury, because it was founded on a principle opposite to, and subversive of the rights of the people; it was therefore declared that the kingdom of England was independent of all foreign power, particularly of the court of Rome, and that the Pope had no right to interfere in the civil government of the realm.

Are we not then to suppose that if such was the conduct of Catholics in such early uninformed stages of society, that the accumulated light and information of some centuries, will have similar and equal effects in increasing their liberality and information, to what it has produced on their Protestant brethren?—Men of science and literature are numerous, very numerous, of that religious persuasion; and the abilities and con-

sequence of members engaged in every department of commerce are second to none of their countrymen. Independent of a principle of justice, which must be allowed to be the leading feature in the business ; our interest essentially demands it. I am well convinced that while Catholics are excluded from a share in legislation, that great desideratum, a parliamentary reform, will be sought for in vain ; is it likely that such partial application as can be made by the Protestants of Ireland, compared to the great body of the people, will be properly attended to ? certainly not ; but the united and determined voice of Ireland must be heard, and will be attended to, in such manner as an application of four millions deserve ; and, even in our present circumstances, if Catholics were allowed franchises on the same terms as Protestants, it would be attended with the most happy effects.

It is said they are more ignorant than the Protestants : of this I have doubts, in so far as elective franchise, similar to that which the Protestants enjoy, would operate ; and I must positively deny the conclusion, as I think upon the slightest consideration of the subject, the use and power of elective franchise, and the occasional intercourse with their fellow electors, and their representatives, with the feeling naturally arising from the rank and importance they hold in the state, will have a powerful and immediate effect in improving their understanding and giving them proper views of their civil rights.

But I would beg of the warmest opposer of the enfranchisement of Catholics, to give me a rational and sincere reason, for the great body of the Catholics of Ireland, acting in opposition to the interest of the state.

The Catholic religion is by no means so adverse to the use and improvements of the human understanding as to render it unfit for the management of the common occurrences of life ; on the contrary, the professors of that religion have ren-



dered themselves highly conspicuous in every department of literature ; and I believe it may be allowed that they are nearly at the head of every science, and have been for a series of time. May we not then suppose that even in the redemption of forfeited estates, if such an absurdity could be conceived, they would pursue maxims of policy similar to those held out by our Protestant delegates in their attempts to produce a parliamentary reform, viz. to recompense, or rather decidedly to purchase, corrupt boroughs from their patrons or proprietors of property (if I may be allowed the expression), unknown to our constitution and unknown to our laws ; yet these reformers purposing to have as few obstructions as possible to an adequate parliamentary reform, were satisfied to sacrifice the national purse, to purchase the assent of venal citizens, certainly on the principle of its having for a number of years been supposed as private property.

You have hitherto exerted yourselves, and contributed to the present improved state of the constitution of your country, in the capacity of citizens and volunteers, and have frequently in your application to your governors, and in your appeal to your brethren, with your mouths prophaned the word *people*, by using their name when their will or opinion was not consulted : I conjure you then to look upon the men of Ireland, without respect to religious profession, as your brethren entitled to equal rights and privileges : then may you without profanation or inconsistency, use the word *people*, in its honest and comprehensive sense ; and then may you boldly adopt what should be the sentiment of every good citizen—*Salus Populi Suprema Lex*.

He was followed by Dr. Haliday, a gentleman who has been looked up to in this place, for near half a century, with veneration and respect, as the steady assertor of the people's rights on every occasion ; as one who ranks among the highest, as a professional man, and unites the profound scholar

with the fine gentleman. He professed his early detestation of the penal code of laws, which was held as a scourge over the heads of our Catholic brethren—and many years back ardently wished to see them done away. But he would not grant that nothing *could* be obtained, without the co-operation of the Roman Catholics of Ireland—because, within his memory, a great deal had been. He reverted to a period, perhaps antecedent to the recollection of any man in that assembly, except himself, the year 1753; that year in which the latent spark of freedom in this country was fanned into a flame, that afterwards illuminated the whole kingdom, and turned its attention to its rights, after that long season of depression, which succeeded the ineffectual, though glorious efforts of the immortal Molyneux. From that period he traced the progressive successes of public virtue, down through their several stages, to the present day. This space comprehended the rendering of our Parliaments octennial, in 1768, instead of depending for their termination on the life of a King! and consequently giving it the power of a tyranny for that undecided duration—the recovery of our right to freedom of trade in 1779—and the restoration of Ireland to imperial dignity in 1782, by establishing the independency of its crown and of its legislature. That all these, and many subordinate measures, were effected without their interference; and that, therefore, he could never grant that nothing could be effected without their aid; as all we had gained was gained without their weight, in any one instance, being thrown into the scale. That he did not the less deplore the state of unjust degradation into which they had, in less enlightened times, been plunged; and hoped for every just concession, as much as he should fear the effects of immediate and perfect emancipation, in a moment. He should regret that such an attempt were made before the time was ripe for it; before the one great body was ready to grant, in an instant, or the other was

prepared or qualified to receive. That before the day could arrive, when the emancipation could in every respect be complete, much information should pervade the general mass, which at present its lowest classes were divested of. That the influence of the Priesthood over the minds of the laity must be considerably reduced, before we could with truth say, that an extension, to all their body, of elective franchise, would increase the virtual basis of election. That the lights of education, long withheld, should first diffuse among them their happy effects—teach them the independency of the human mind—and the nature, as well as the value, of those blessings which a free constitution can alone bestow. Till that period arrive, receiving as electors the whole mass of that uninstructed body, would be dangerous both to themselves and to us, and would not ultimately tend to the interests of either.

Mr. Robert Getty.—It seems the extension of the elective franchise to our Roman Catholic brethren, is the great objection to the prayer of the petition last read.

It should be remembered, that the law depriving them of this liberty, was made after the commencement of this century. That they enjoyed in as full an extent as the Protestants do now this right, for a series of time after the Revolution, without danger to the establishment; and that then their ignorance was not more noticed than that of the other subjects of the kingdom. But, Mr. Chairman, the fact is, we found them then equally enlightened as ourselves, and our penal laws have been the cause of that ignorance so much lamented, which actually has debased their nature, and by continuing them, we continue their ignorance. The power of their clergy has been much talked of, and it is what many liberal and good men much fear. It has been remarked by a celebrated writer, that wherever we find people profoundly ignorant, there the ministers of their religion have over them a



mighty influence ; I therefore say, that you effect a most desirable reform in this particular, by dispelling that ignorance which will inevitably produce that effect ; and no men at this moment in the state, are more averse to the relaxations spoken of, than the Priests, as they dread the decay of their own power, over the uninformed minds of the present race of Roman Catholics. He said a few words more on the use of contested elections, which by bringing people together in numbers, have a tendency of increasing their knowledge of public affairs, by communication of sentiment ; and this body of our countrymen in their present situation, have no opportunity of using such advantages.

Mr. Le Blanc, (a tambour-worker) began by saying he was " a foreigner by birth, but a citizen of the world by principle," and delivered a very animated speech in favour of the amendment. He concluded with a declaration, that it appeared a little ridiculous to him, to see a town consisting of 20,000 inhabitants deliberating about granting rights to others, *who had no rights themselves.*

Doctor Bruce said, he frequently had reason to regret, that the more immediate duties and avocations of life prevented his attending the meetings of this town as a citizen, or contributing the aid of an humble individual in matters of public moment as they arose.

Born in a free country, nurtured in the earliest love and admiration of the principles of liberty, and inheriting equally by descent as by religious profession, a steady attachment to every human right ; he should once have considered it impossible to find himself in the situation in which he stood there that day. To take that side which could on any question be construed into the least liberal, is a predicament that he should not have conceived any train of events could have placed him in. However, when he observed around him a number of the first characters in this town, professing sentiments similar to

his own ; many of those who had given dignity to its former deliberations ; and whose names a long series of public virtue has taught the most distant parts of this kingdom to contemplate with veneration—he felt the highest consolation he could receive, after the approving testimony of his own mind.

Were his sentiments (he said) respecting the Roman Catholics of Ireland generally known in this assembly, it were unnecessary to assert that their gradual admission to civil franchise, and an abolition of the many unjust and impolitic penal laws still in force against them, are not with him the transient subjects of a day, but had long had his most serious attention, and warmest approbation.—The experience of every year added confidence to his opinion, that this country without a coalition of its inhabitants, can never possess that consequence in the scale of empire to which its numbers should entitle it.

He said, that when he heard, as of late he had often done, *the rights of man* pleaded in their abstract sense, as that line from which not the smallest deviation is in practice to be made ; when he found them adduced as an argument for an instant transfer of power from one body of the people to another—despising every caution in the mode of granting it, and regardless of the past history of the country, its present condition, or the mixed genius of its inhabitants ; he must essentially differ from men, the purity of whose intentions he might admire, but the precipitancy of whose measures he must regret.

Did the nature of so large a meeting admit a general and intimate acquaintance with ancient and modern republics, of the several states which have flourished in their turns at different periods of the world : he might, on the testimony of history, defy the advocates for such extravagant opinions to produce a single instance in which the mere abstract theory of

rights, the perfect equality of men, were ever, in forming the basis of any government, strictly applied.

America, flushed with conquest, and rising triumphantly from the stroke of despotic power, without any thing to control her deliberations on the establishment of as perfect freedom as wisdom could devise—never suffered herself to be borne away by ingenious refinements, nor to lose the attainment of every practicable good, in the vain pursuit of ideal.

France, after tearing up her ancient government by its roots, destroying hereditary honors and reducing the lofty fabric of a long established hierarchy, never entertained the wish of moulding its new constitution on the rights of men in the abstract.—Had it done so, persons, not property, had been exclusively represented: but in the French constitution property as well as persons, is a basis of representation.

If we follow, without restriction, the theory of human rights, where will it lead us? In its principle it requires the admission of women, of persons under age, and of paupers, to suffrage at elections; to places of office and trust, and as members of both Houses of Parliament.

He found himself warranted, therefore, in saying, that, though actuated by as much philanthropy towards his Roman Catholic brethren as any other man, and possessing as sincere a wish for their emancipation—it was impossible for him to join in the wish to throw open to them in a moment the sources of power, without a dereliction of every principle of prudence and good sense. That portion of the Irish community being so much greater than the rest, a full extension of the rights of man would at one stroke, without any previous illumination of their minds by education, without any preparation on either side, transfer every power of government, from the most to the least tolerant, from the most to the least enlightened part of the state—from the Protestants to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. From their comparative numbers



such would be the immediate effect ; nor can any one, maintaining the abstract question of right, deny that this is an immediate result from the principle.

He said that no man would assert that the Roman Catholics (taking them in the aggregate) are in their present state as well informed, or as capable of holding the reins of government with wisdom and moderation, as the Protestants. The former from the nature of things, must feel restraint and ill humor in consequence of ancient prejudices, and continued oppression. These will require time to subside, and may be best removed by a gradual extension of immunities ; which will at the same time have a doubly happy effect, by eradicating Protestant as well as Catholic prejudices, and preparing the one to grant freely from affection, what the other may then be better qualified to receive.

That great and immediate changes are not often desirable even in matters of less consequence. That to individuals in private life, they are seldom productive of happiness : to nations, they prove frequently ruinous.

That a moment's reflection might convince any man, that innumerable, unforeseen and dangerous effects, leading to tumult and confusion, might be expected from a revolution of power so conducted. To enter into so wide a field would exceed the limited time of the meeting. He could not, however, avoid briefly touching on a point which had naturally led to much discussion—its possible consequences respecting the forfeited estates in this country.

The point of *right* in resuming these estates seems to be absolute : nor would there, supposing a complete transfer of power to the Roman Catholics, be any bar to it, except the right which conquest has given to the present proprietors ; a kind of right now justly exploded and which would in the case alluded to be little respected.

The treaty of Limerick cannot affect the right ; for a

single garrison could not capitulate for a whole kingdom, nor bind it for ever. Laws and charters cannot invalidate it; because made by a small body, under direction from a foreign country, exercising what would then be deemed usurped authority. Consider how these forfeitures were incurred. In defending the country against foreign oppression, in Queen Elizabeth's reign; in the plantation of Ulster, by James the first; the grants of lands to Cromwell's captains, which would be impeachable even on English restoration principles; the forfeitures under James the second, the lawful King of Ireland, fighting at the head of his people against a Dutchman, whose claim, even to the English crown, was a disputed election—none at all to the Irish crown, except the old law, that both countries should have the same king, which would scarcely apply, and would certainly be set aside, in case of a rupture with England. If such change of power came about without any tumult or hostilities, it is possible that still the higher orders might act from a principle of right, in claiming their estates; the priests, and the lower classes, from bigotry, pride of power and clanship. But as there must, in the course of such a revolution, necessarily be some irritation, perhaps exasperation, this would render a change of property, with a change of power, the more likely: if a considerable body of the Protestants of rank and fortune resisted the revolution, it might be looked on as certain. If titles could not be produced, but only a strong probability of ancient right could be made out, they might call on the present possessors to produce their titles; the very production of which would establish, instead of weakening, the old claims, by reciting that the lands in question had been taken from such and such persons, for such and such causes, in the very act of defending the government and the religion of their ancestors.

With every desire to accelerate the day of the complete

enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, but convinced, that in a matter of such immense magnitude, a gradual and progressive change is the most desirable (the only practicable one) and equally the interest of all—he said he must support the address, as originally moved by Mr. Holmes, praying that the repeal may be “from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country, and the welfare of the whole kingdom will permit.”

Considering himself called upon as a moralist, a citizen, and a divine, he adverted, with irresistible force of argument, to the influence which he conceived a considerable part of the meeting might act under, in consequence of a test taken by them in the society of United Irishmen. As this part of his speech has been the subject of some conversation, we should not, in a matter of nice discussion, think ourselves warranted in going into it without being able, very nearly, to follow the words of the speaker; especially as this topic has since been fully discussed.

Mr. Neilson said, he meant only to notice one point of the very long and extraneous speech they had just heard, namely, that which alluded to the Society of United Irishmen; a society of which he was proud to acknowledge himself a member. The learned gentleman had, he said, gone far out of his way indeed to attack that society and its test: but to what did this test go? to union and consequent reform. Can any advancement in knowledge, any change of circumstance, render union and reform improper? But the gentleman has refuted himself; he has attacked all tests, and yet the very first step taken by that assembly, which he has so properly stiled enlightened, when they set about framing their constitution, was to take a test. While the gentleman speaks from misinformation, as it appears he has done on the present point, the societies are equally heedless of his praise as regardless of his censure.



Dr. White said, it was little to be expected that a gentleman from his earliest infancy, nurtured and brought up with the most liberal ideas of civil and religious liberty, which he said he was proud to boast of, and at the same time a Minister of the Gospel, professing dissent from all subscriptions, creeds or confessions of faith, should yet incline to deny the exercise of the right of private judgment, in matters of religion, to brethren, without subjecting them to the penalties of civil incapacities. Such doctrines might have been expected from the ministers of a different church, whose abilities have often been prostituted in inculcating even from the pulpit the exploded doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance; but that such opinions very ill become a Protestant Dissenting Minister, at the present enlightened æra.

Mr. Samuel Mc. Tier said, that he thought the Society of United Irishmen, very improperly introduced: he had the honor of belonging to that body, had taken the test, but thought himself at liberty to vote as he pleased.

Dr. M'Donnell observed, that this should rather be considered as a moral and religious, than a political question. He had been connected both by the ties of friendship and of blood with several Roman Catholic gentlemen, both at home and abroad; he could find nothing in their political or religious opinions to prevent their being good citizens; he had been accustomed from his earliest infancy to hear them flattered with the same language which the present mild petition breathes; this has been the language of the Protestant people, of the Parliament, and of every printed book these forty years: "They were to be liberated from time to time."

He observed that this was not the first period, in the history of mankind, where the same game had been played; he adverted to the late proceedings in England, relative to the slave-trade. The situation of the African was to be meliorated; they would cease importing him from time to time, ac-

vording to expediency. He called the attention of the assembly to a most parallel example. When the Spaniards became masters of Cuba and Hispaniola, they divided the people as they did their lands and treasures among their officers. Some became possessed of 800, some of 1400 head of people. The Dominican and Franciscan Friars remonstrated against this mode of enslaving the Indians. They carried their remonstrance to the court of Spain, (a court milder at that time, and more alive to the feelings of humanity than our parliament at present) their cause was pleaded before an august tribunal, witnesses were heard on both sides; they proceeded exactly as we are proceeding at this moment. The question of right to liberty was admitted on the side of the Indian—the question of expediency appeared difficult; it was at length determined, “they should be liberated from time to time.” But that time has never arrived, nor can it now ever, for there is not at present one soul existing in either Cuba or Hispaniola. The race of Indians is extirpated—they were extirpated from time to time. Would to God, therefore, that you would not join with the language of a court in extending her blessings of Freedom to your brethren by piece-meal; for what is Freedom, but a jest and a farce, if its blessings are dispensed and received as the favour of kindness and humanity, instead of being considered as an inheritance and as a right!

Mr. Thomson.—Much has been said of the incapacity of those professing the Roman Catholic religion, for the enjoyment of freedom, but we seem to forget that the boldest features of the British Constitution were procured by Roman Catholics, and that to a parliament of that persuasion we are indebted for a great outline of an Irish constitution. You talk of referring it to the wisdom of Parliament, to grant them from time to time their rights; that is to say, the English Secretary, *pro tempore*, is to determine on that time and that

extent which will be most for the interest of his master, the English Minister.

Sir, from my own knowledge, I say that it has been the practice of government, to hold up one persuasion as a bugbear to the other, and thereby to refuse rights to either ; it is high time the delusion should terminate, and that the Irish nation should unite and demand in a temperate but firm tone, those rights which are their inheritance. And I ask, if thus united, and thus determined, where is the power that dare refuse them ?

It has been said, Sir, that we have obtained many great points without the aid of the Catholics, and why may we not also obtain reform without that aid ? I answer, all we have obtained have been to benefit the aristocracy, not the people. What have been the advantages of your free constitution, as it is called ? why an advance in the price of boroughs : 3000*l.* instead of 1000*l.* for a seat ! But how does the point stand with respect to the people ? an increase of taxes to bribe our own countrymen to oppress us, which was formerly done by the English, gratis. In every step we took to obtain our trade and constitution, our own aristocracy and boroughmongers, being chiefly interested, warmly supported us ; but is it their interest to support us in reform ?—Do they not almost to a man warmly oppose us ?—How then can one million of Irishmen obtain their rights, in opposition to Irish aristocracy,—to English influence,—to three millions of their own countrymen ? So far with respect to policy and expediency ; but when we come to talk of right and justice, what will we say ? Shall we pretend equal representation, and exclude three-fourths of our fellow-subjects ? I say in such a case we ought not to succeed, and I further declare, that I would now lament it as one of the greatest misfortunes that could have befallen this country, had we succeeded in our limited and unjust notions of reform in 1783.



A gentleman has talked of Switzerland, and called it the region of liberty. I will ask that gentleman, are not Catholics and Protestants united in that country ; and is not this an additional argument, if any were required, that there is nothing in the Catholic religion by any means inimical to civil liberty ?

He concluded by stating, that as the town of Belfast had no representative, and as the only share we had in the representation of Ireland was from a few of us being freeholders of the county of Antrim, where indeed we are faithfully represented, the petition must be sent to the Right Hon. J. O'Neill, in order to be by him presented to Parliament in the name of the town of Belfast.

In the course of the debate it was argued, that every member of a state, contributing by his ingenuity and industry to its well-being, has a right to advise in its government ; and as it would be impossible that every inconsiderable member of it could be properly employed as a legislator, that that duty must be performed by delegation, and that he is therefore necessitated to unite with his district in the choice of a representative. That no person so contributing by his labour, his learning, or his ingenuity, to the support of his country, can be equitably debarred from a share in its legislation, either in person or by proxy ; especially as the laws so to be made must affect the life, liberty, and property of all. Considering these as fundamental principles, it seems extraordinary that the professing of any particular system of religion should be a sufficient pretext for exclusion from civil privileges. It has been often alleged, that the Catholic Religion, and a belief in its doctrines, were incompatible with good citizenship. How is this warranted by historical fact ? To Roman Catholics we are indebted for the trial by jury ; for the institution of parliaments ; the great charter of liberty ; and our Catholic neighbours have given us a luminous view of their capaci-

ty of forming a government eminently calculated to establish civil rights and equal liberty among men. A Roman Catholic parliament in Henry the Fourth's time (1399) passed an act against the Pope's bull, because it was subversive of the rights of the people. It was therefore declared, that England was independent of all foreign power, particularly of the Court of Rome. Are we not then to suppose, that if such was the conduct of Catholics in such ignorant stages of society, that the accumulated light of centuries shall have still more encreased their liberality and information? That no partial application for a reform of Parliament can ever succeed; that the only effectual one must result from the united and determined voice of the whole people of Ireland,—no man can deny who takes a retrospect of a few years, and the treatment which the Protestant prayers of the people for reforms of every kind have experienced, and daily experience. It was further argued that by the concession of the elective suffrage to the Catholics, in the same degree as Protestants already enjoy it, an addition of 2 or 300,000 electors to the present number, would be attended with the happiest effects on the freedom of election, by enlarging the basis of it. In answer to those who are well inclined to their emancipation, but allege that at present it would be premature, on account of their want of information and knowledge, it was said that the most certain means of dispelling that ignorance, and rooting out the subjection which their priests would wish to keep them in, would be the exercise of elective franchise; which by giving them an intercourse with their fellow-electors, and a communication of sentiment, would soon dispel the mist of ignorance, make them feel their own dignity, improve their understandings, and give them a relish for the enjoyment of every civil right.

The history of elections convinces us that the forty shilling freeholder is more under the undue influence of his landlord,

than the menial servant is of his master ; that therefore votes should be given to every description of people, as the best means of rendering bribery, corruption, and undue influence, impossible or of little avail.

That the argument respecting the recovery of forfeited lands, had little weight, considering the distant period when they were lost—few of them less than a century and a half back ; since which time they have passed from hand to hand, and many of them again become, by purchase, the property of Roman Catholics. That the Catholics themselves would perceive such insuperable obstacles to the success of these claims, that those descendants of the proprietors of forfeited estates, who could prove their title, would be so few, that the general body would never suffer them to be gone into ; in order to prevent confusion in the state, and the interruption of national tranquillity, then become so much their interest to maintain. Let it be remembered what a small portion the forfeited estates bear to the whole landed interest of Ireland—and it will be granted, that they do not deserve all the regard which is often paid to them, in considering the subject of this day's discussion. The difficulties in the way to a reversion of the forfeitures, are many and great ; among others, a bill for that purpose would have to be brought into Parliament—pass both houses—and receive the Royal assent.

On the other hand,—the friends of the original motion professed as warm an attachment to their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects as the other side, and as ardent a wish for their complete emancipation ; but they thought, that this would be best effected by degrees.

As the expunging of the words from time to time, &c. had been supported on this principle, that the rights of man are indefeasible, and that they cannot rightfully be withheld even for a moment.—This was admitted, but still it was contended, that no government had ever been constituted upon the strict



theory of these principles ;—that the French legislators themselves had thought it necessary to restrict the right of suffrage ; and that when a country had fallen into the present circumstances of Ireland, it must extricate itself from them by degrees. That all sudden reverses of fortune are dangerous to the virtue or moderation of the wisest individual, and still more so to that of a multitude—circumstanced like the Irish Catholics.

That the Roman Catholics of this country are not, in their present state, as well informed or as capable of exercising government as the Protestants.

That the Roman Catholics must feel resentment and ill humor in consequence of ancient injuries, recent insults, and continued oppression.

That these will require time to subside, and will be best removed by a gradual extension of immunities and privileges ; which at the same time would have another happy effect, in gradually eradicating prejudices from the minds of Protestants, and preparing them to grant what the others are willing to receive.

That the Roman Catholics having formerly lost their possessions, fighting for the liberty of their country, against a foreign power, must think that they have a right to resume them when they can, and to abrogate any laws passed during what they consider as an usurpation, that may stand in their way. That on the principle of immediate liberation, and unlimited communication of the rights of man, this would be in their power ;—and that a moderate exercise of absolute power in such circumstances, could not be expected even from the most enlightened people.

That the mass of the Catholics are subject to the influence of their priests in an undue degree ; and that under their direction the lower orders would, in case of a sudden revolution, compel their more enlightened superiors to yield to their de-

sires ; and among other alterations, to restore their hierarchy to its former splendor and power, as the established religion of the land.

That for these reasons, though they longed for an entire abolition of invidious and oppressive distinctions, for the general exercise of every franchise, they could not vote for the accomplishment of this object, otherwise than from time to time—commencing at present with some essential concessions, and progressively encreasing, as the circumstances of the country and the welfare of the whole kingdom would permit.

That those who insist on the propriety of admitting every denomination of men to elective suffrage, on the principle that persons not property should be represented, and that it should go to the admission of menial servants, or, according to the Duke of Richmond's plan, even to paupers themselves—should recollect, that the most enlightened assembly the world ever saw, the French constituting assembly, with every due attention to the rights of man, made property one of the bases of elective franchise.—Unanimity, as far as it could be effected without a violation of principle, was ardently recommended.—That as the whole assembly appeared to be of one mind touching the general principle, it was for the interest of the Roman Catholic cause that Belfast should come to such a decision that day as would embrace every liberal man's ideas in its favor.—That many of the most respectable members of the town ; of those whose names were long known as the encouragers of every principle of freedom, civil and religious, could not go the whole length of the prayer of the petition, were it to declare a wish that the emancipation should be instantaneous and universal. That the advice of a prudent Catholic divine, whatever his dignity in that church, from the Curate of Belfast, to the Titular Primate of Ireland—would be—“ let our friends of the North beware of dividing a town of such consequence, of such liberality as this one. Let them remember that every decla-

ration in our favor is a point gained ; and must eventually lead to matters of higher consequence.—That generous sentiments unanimously declared by such a body, will do more to banish prejudice on both sides, than the most forcible resolution carried against a respectable minority. That the repeal of a great part of the penal code was the offspring of the divine spirit of toleration exemplified at the volunteer assembly in Dungannon, in 1782 ; that had more been then attempted, less perhaps had been obtained ; that we have since that period experienced the decay of more religious prejudice than any equal portion of the history of man can find a parallel to. That there is a natural progress in human affairs, a slight attention must convince every man ; and that, as one favourable step is the parent of another, in gradual measures we have the best chance for success."

Having now gone through most of the arguments which we at present can recollect, with some trifling additions, for the purpose of connection, we shall conclude by mentioning the issue of the day's proceedings ; and reminding our readers, inhabitants of Belfast, of the salutary advice which fell with so much propriety from a divine of the Protestant Dissenting Church, Dr. Bruce : that we were met on a glorious principle, the relief of our Catholic brethren ; that every allowance should be made for the unavoidable shades of difference, which in a question of such magnitude must occur between the most enlightened minds ;—that being all of one opinion regarding the general subject, it was our duty to preserve the most perfect harmony, let the issue of the day's business be what it may ; and that any asperity which the ardor of debate may possibly induce, should be forgotten with the moment.

The question for expunging was then put, and carried by a very considerable majority.



The petition, as amended, and forwarded to Mr. O'Neill for presentation, is annexed.

A motion was made by Mr. Joy, that the resolution which succeeds the petition should pass, respecting the clergy and laity of the Roman Catholic persuasion coming forward with a declaration of their religious sentiments, as far as they are connected with civil and political liberty; and it was fully explained that the expectation was that their clergy and laity should do it, as separate bodies—which resolution having met with an unanimous concurrence, the assembly adjourned.

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*Belfast, 28th January, 1792.*

AT a very numerous and respectable meeting of the town of Belfast, convened by public advertisement, signed by 53 inhabitants, held in the town-house, and from thence adjourned, for want of room, to the New Meeting-house:

*THE REV. SINCLARE KELBURN, IN THE CHAIR:*

A motion was made and seconded, that a committee be now appointed to prepare a petition to Parliament, and that the prayer of said petition be as follows:

That our Roman Catholic brethren have long been, and still are, in a degraded situation, from numerous restrictive and penal statutes hanging over them; and conscious as we are, that the prosperity, happiness, and improvement of this country, must eventually depend on an union of interests among all religious denominations of the inhabitants—We therefore pray the legislature may be pleased to repeal, (from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country, and the welfare of the whole kingdom will permit) all penal and restrictive statutes at present in existence against the Roman Catholics of Ireland; that they may be thus restored to the rank and consequence of citizens.

A motion was made and seconded, that said petition be amended, by expanding the following words—"from time to

time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country, and the welfare of the whole kingdom will permit ;” which motion, after a long debate, passed in the affirmative, by a very large majority.

A motion was made and seconded, that the said petition, as now amended, do stand the petition of the inhabitants of Belfast to Parliament, which passed in the affirmative, without a division.

A motion was made and seconded, that the following be the preamble to said petition :

To the Right Hon. and Honorable the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses, in parliament assembled ;  
The humble Petition of the Inhabitants of the town of Belfast,  
by public advertisement convened in the town-house—  
Which passed unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded, that the said petition be copied fair, signed by the inhabitants, and inclosed in a letter from our chairman to the Right Hon. John O'Neill, requesting him, in the name of the town, to present the same to parliament ; which passed unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded, that we think it the duty, as well as the interest, of the clergy and laity of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, to follow the recent example of fifteen hundred Catholics of England, by making a solemn declaration of their religious principles, as far as they are connected with civil and political liberty—which passed unanimously.

Resolved unanimously, That the proceedings of the day be published twice in the Dublin Evening Post, and in each of the Belfast News-papers.

SINCLARE KELBURN. -

The Chairman having left the chair, and James Ferguson, Esq. having been called to it—

Resolved unanimously, That the warmest thanks of this

meeting are due to our chairman, for his very impartial and proper conduct in the chair.

JAMES FERGUSON.

*Belfast, January 19, 1792.*

AT a numerous and respectable meeting of the Catholics of Belfast and its district :

*THE REV. H. O'DONNELL, P. P. IN THE CHAIR :*

The following resolutions were unanimously agreed to :

Resolved, That the hitherto peaceable demeanor of the Catholics of Ireland, must give the legislature the most unequivocal proof of their loyalty to His Majesty, obedience to the laws, and attachment to the constitution of the realm.

Resolved, That the general committee of the Catholics of Dublin, deputed as they are by the general voice of our body from all parts of the kingdom, is, and ought to be, the only organ through which our opinions can be declared, and through which our sentiments can or ought to be made known ; and we solicit that committee of friends and patriots in the cause of our emancipation, to accept our sincere and warmest thanks, for their uniform zeal in supporting our cause, by humble applications to the legislature in our behalf.

Resolved, That we detest and hold in abhorrence any individual, however exalted his rank or situation, who steps forward with insidious zeal and untrue fabrications, to represent us as a divided people, indifferent to that degree of emancipation which the general committee are constitutionally, and we trust not ineffectually, soliciting from government ; and well knowing that our sect entertain no principles hostile to the constitution, we hold in abhorrence the sentiments set forth in a late address, " that any circumstances, or situation of the empire, should render the repeal of all penal statutes dangerous or impolitic."

Resolved, That as some doubts may still exist, from ma-



lignant insinuations having gone forth, that our worthy Protestant Brethren of Ulster, (who have lately so distinguished themselves, by forming the societies of United Irishmen, by their proceedings at the late town-meeting,\* and by other public acts in our favor) are not sincere in their expressions, as set forth in their liberal declarations, we cheerfully stand forward to assert, that such insinuations are groundless and void of truth; and that we with great pleasure contemplate that true spirit of Christianity which produces the harmony, brotherly love and affection subsisting among us.

Resolved, That our warmest thanks be given to Mr. Patrick Byrne, Mr. R. Cross, and Mr. James R. Kelly, our three worthy representatives in the general committee.

Resolved, that these our unanimous resolutions be published in the Dublin Evening Post, in the B. N. Letter, and the Northern Star.

Signed by order of the meeting,

HU. O'DONNELL, CHAIRMAN.

.....

\* This alludes to a meeting of Freeholders of the county of Antrim, resident at Belfast, respecting a Knight of the Shire in the room of Lord Langford, on the 18th of January, 1792, one of which resolutions ran thus :

“That we consider the proceedings of the freeholders at the late county meeting, held at Ballymena, deserving our highest approbation, in having established a proper test, to be taken by every candidate for the representation of the county—a test, in which an adequate representation of the Irish Nation in the Commons’ House, forms the principal feature—a representation, which, when introduced and established on liberal principles, including every religious description of Irishmen, must procure all those beneficial measures so properly pointed out in said test.”

AT a meeting of the Third Society of United Irishmen of Belfast, on the 23d of January, 1792:

Resolved unanimously, that we adopt the following as the engagement of our plighted faith to our country and to each other, to be subscribed by every member on his admission, viz. We pledge ourselves to our Country, and mutually to each other, that we will steadily support, and endeavour, by all due means, to carry into effect the following resolutions:

1st, Resolved, "That the weight of English influence in the government of this country, is so great as to require a cordial union among all the people of Ireland, to maintain that balance which is essential to the preservation of our liberties, and the extension of our commerce.

2d, Resolved, "That the sole constitutional mode by which this influence can be opposed, is by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament.

3d, "That no reform is practicable, efficacious, and just, which shall not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion."

Signed by order,

ALEX. WATT, SEC.

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*Belfast, 30th January, 1792.*

LEST any misapprehensions should arise respecting the difference of opinion which took place at the late meeting of Protestant and Roman Catholic inhabitants of this town, held on Saturday last: We the undersigned, who dissent, in a certain degree, from the proceedings of that day, think it proper to declare, that the only point of difference was—whether the entire enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, including suffrage at elections, should be immediate, or progressive—"from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country and the general welfare of the whole kingdom will permit."

[The words marked with inverted commas were those which were expunged from the prayer of the petition.]

|                                   |                                    |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Wm. Bristow, Sovn.<br>of Belfast, | Alex. Bailie,<br>Robert Kingsmill, | James Williamson,<br>James Mullan, |
| A. H. Haliday, M. D.              | Charles Brett,                     | Geo. Robinson,                     |
| Wm. Bruce, D. D.                  | Thos. Banks,                       | William Irwin,                     |
| R. Meade, (Rev'd.)                | George Famber,                     | James M'Adam,                      |
| P. Vance, (Rev'd.)                | James Black,                       | James Steele,                      |
| John Ewing,                       | Arthur Buntin                      | Robert Montgomery,                 |
| John Holmes,                      | John Holmes, junr.                 | Adam Brown,                        |
| Wad. Cunningham,                  | Alex. Gordon,                      | James Russell,                     |
| Thomas Hyde,                      | R. M'Cluney,                       | Henry Bleakley,                    |
| Barth. Fuller,                    | John Milford,                      | Wm. Donaldson,                     |
| Henry Joy,                        | John Robinson                      | Robert M'Millen,                   |
| John Ashmore,                     | David Thoburn,                     | John M'Curdy,                      |
| Cunningham Greg,                  | John Brown,                        | Andrew M'Clune,                    |
| Narcissus Batt,                   | John Ferguson,                     | David M'Adam,                      |
| John H. Houston,                  | Samuel Law,                        | James Park,                        |
| Jas. Bristow, (Knt.)              | Chas. Mackenzie,                   | John Lascelles,                    |
| Sam. H. Batt,                     | Thomas Cavan,                      | Wm. Lascelles,                     |
| Hill Wallace,                     | Andrew Macnevin,                   | John Sanders,                      |
| Robert Holmes,                    | Jas. Montgomery,                   | Stephen Strickland,                |
| John Brown,                       | Samuel Ferguson,                   | Joseph Germain,                    |
| David Dunn,                       | John M'Cammon,                     | Thomas Ansley,                     |
| James Holmes,                     | James Martin,                      | John M'Nair,                       |
| Robert Davis,                     | Alex. Moreland,                    | John Germain,                      |
| Stewart Banks,                    | James Wier,                        | Thomas Gray,                       |
| Robt. Apsley, M. D.               | Hugh Graham,                       | John Moor,                         |
| John Clarke,                      | Robert Hilditch,                   | John Fraser,                       |
| Thos. Greg,                       | Christ. Hudson,                    | Francis Warrick,                   |
| Wm. Seed,                         | Adams M'Master,                    | Henry Milholland,                  |
| Sam. Brown,                       | Simon M'Creary,                    | James Sloan,                       |
| Wm. Burgess,                      | Robert Hodgson,                    | Robt. Singleton,                   |
| Wm. Burden,                       | Francis Joy,                       | Thomas Allen,                      |
| Val. Jones,                       | John Thoburn,                      | Wm. Allen,                         |
| John Alexander,                   | Jos. Thoburn, sen.                 | James Ainsworth,                   |
| John Cranston,                    | Marcus Ward,                       | Samuel Smith,                      |
| George Black,                     | Joseph Smith,                      | Robt. M'Dowell,                    |
| Alex. Orr,                        | Wm. Stewart,                       | Henry Ingram,                      |



|                   |                       |                    |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| John Brown,       | Samuel Smith,         | Michael Smyth,     |
| Wm. Stevenson,    | George Beck,          | Samuel M'Cutcheon, |
| Wm. Irvin,        | Harris Beck,          | Wm. Greer,         |
| John Campbell,    | Joseph Beck,          | Alex. Brown,       |
| Charles Ranken,   | John Reid,            | Clotworthy M'Quin, |
| J. Mattear, M. D. | Richard Murdoch,      | Wm. Fletcher,      |
| George Joy,       | James Moore,          | Nat. Main,         |
| James Ferguson,   | T. M'Cracken,         | A. M'Neilly,       |
| John Hamilton,    | Arch. Stewart,        | Jn. Boyd,          |
| Robt. Gordon,     | Wm. Walker,           | Wm. Campbell,      |
| Jas. Cleland,     | Robt. Elliot,         | Wm. Taylor,        |
| R. Gordon, jun.   | Ferdinand Fitzsimons, | David Irvin,       |
| Richard Bamber,   | Jas. Graham,          | Jas. M'Master,     |
| David Tomb.       | Stewart Lowry,        | Conway Carleton,   |
| John Galt Smith,  | James Frazer,         | John Baker,        |
| John Mathers,     | Jos. Mollineaux,      | George Rippet,     |
| Robt. Bradshaw,   | James Milliken,       | James Baker,       |
| Hugh Wilson,      | Robert Brown,         | Arch. M'Clure,     |
| John Macartney,   | Robert Getty,         | Thos. Herdman,     |
| John Henderson,   | George Herdman,       | Robert Bailie,     |
| Abel Hadskis,     | Wm. M'Cune,           | Wm. Scott,         |
| John Gregg,       | James White,          | Walter M'Maw,      |
| Jas. T. Kennedy,  | David Gilliland       | Wm. Martin,        |
| Geo. Black, jun.  | Richard Lunn,         | John Beatty,       |
| Sam. Hyde,        | Thomas Herdman.       | Sam. Hodgson,      |
| John Smylie,      | Robert Byars,         | James Mulligan,    |
| Robt. Stevenson,  | Robert Trimble,       | Charles Henry,     |
| Sam. Robinson,    | James Law,            | David Mollyneaux,  |
| Wm. Thomson,      | David Mitchell,       | John Gilmore,      |
| John Getty,       | Wm. Anderson,         | James Sufferen,    |
| Robert Wallace,   | John M'Kee,           | James Johnston,    |
| Pat. Mc. Master,  | Samuel M'Clelland,    | Samuel Mitchell,   |
| Gilbert Webster,  | Joseph Thoburn,       | Wm. Sayers,        |
| Thos. Andrews,    | Robt. Henderson,      | Thomas Fulton,     |
| Wm. Seed, M. D.   | Alex. Moody,          | Stewart B. Craig,  |
| Edward Patterson, | David Bradford,       | John Sutton,       |
| (Rev.)            | John Turnley,         | John H. Corbett,   |
| Ezek. D. Boyd,    | Edward Hunt,          | John Elliott,      |

|                     |                  |                      |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Ezek. D. Boyd, jun. | G. B. Madden,    | James Hunter,        |
| J. Hamilton, Rev.   | Thos. Lyle,      | Jos. Stevenson, jun. |
| Francis Turnly,     | John Stevenson,  | John Ross,           |
| Joseph Stevenson,   | Nicholas Mercer, | Alex. Mc. Ilrath,    |
| Val. Joyce,         | Richard Barnet,  | John Mc. Millan,     |
| Wm. England,        | Hugh Jelly,      | Lewis H. Macklin,    |
| Wm. Gow,            | James Johnston,  | (Rev'd.)             |
| James Crombee,      | John Lynch,      | Wm. Atkinson,        |
| Samuel Brown,       | Wm. M'Cormick    | Michael Campbell,    |
| Thos. Graham,       | Wm. Goyer,       | Orr Reid,            |
| Hugh Kyle,          | N. Alexander,    | Robert Scott.        |

### BELFAST ROMAN CATHOLIC SOCIETY.

AT a meeting of the Roman Catholic inhabitants of the town of Belfast and its vicinity, held at Mr. Hugh Dowell's, on the 6th of April, 1792,

*MR. JAMES MOONEY, IN THE CHAIR:*

The declaration of the General Committee of the Catholics of Ireland being read paragraph by paragraph, the following resolutions were agreed to—

Resolved unanimously, That the declaration is strictly conformable with our principles as Christians and Catholics, agreeable to the tenets of the faith we have maintained, and that we will ever adhere to them.

Resolved unanimously, That we solemnly declare we have never harboured opinions inimical to the civil, religious, or political liberty of mankind; particularly of our fellow subjects of a different persuasion.

Resolved unanimously, That so far from entertaining the most distant thought of disturbing the tranquillity of the kingdom, by unsettling the landed property thereof, our highest ambition is, to participate in the constitution of our country; and we do most heartily concur in a solemn declaration, that we never will join in any attempt to overthrow the Protestant government of Ireland.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the General Catholic Committee, for their steady, manly, and constitutional proceedings in their late application to the legislature; and we entreat they may persevere until their efforts be crowned with success.

Resolved unanimously, That the sincerest and most grateful thanks of this meeting be given to the virtuous and enlightened members of the legislature, who supported with their unrivaled abilities, the petition of three millions of his Majesty's faithful subjects, in order to restore them to their long lost rights; and to obtain for them a participation in the scale of government, with the minority of their fellow-subjects.

Resolved unanimously, That the warmest thanks of this meeting be given to William Todd Jones, and Theobald Wolfe Tone, Esqrs. for their laborious and unwearied exertions, to rescue the character of the unhappy Catholics from the aspersions of malevolent and bigoted partizans; and for their uniform tenor of conduct to restore the injured Catholic to the state that God and Nature designed him for.

Resolved unanimously, That "while memory holds her seat," we shall never forget the glorious and philanthropic effort our fellow-citizens made on the 28th of January last, in being the first Protestant body in the kingdom, who evinced that they felt for the sufferings of their Catholic brethren, by presenting a petition in their behalf to the legislature; and they are hereby requested to accept of the warm effusions of hearts overflowing with gratitude for the same.

Resolved unanimously, That our chairman transmit a copy of the above resolutions to Edward Byrne, Esq. chairman of the Catholic Committee, Wm. Todd Jones, Esq. and Theobald Wolfe Tone, Esq.

Resolved unanimously, That the above resolutions be published twice in the Belfast newspapers, and National Journal.

Resolved unanimously, That 5000 copies of the declara-



tion of the General Catholic Committee of Ireland, with these our resolutions, be printed in hand-bills.

JAS. MOONEY.

Mr. Mooney having left the chair, and Mr. Heyland having taken it,

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to Mr. Mooney, for his praiseworthy conduct in the chair.

CHARLES HEYLAND.

THE following is a copy of the letter from Edw. Byrne, Esq Chairman of the General Committee of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, to the Rev. S. Kelburn, as chairman of the meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, held 28th January, 1792.

SIR,

IN compliance with the instructions of the General Committee of Roman Catholics, I inclose you a copy of the resolutions which passed at our meeting on this day.

I am directed to assure you, that we feel a deep sense of the obligations we owe to you, and your worthy fellow-citizens of Belfast, for the marks of kindness which we have, on former occasions, received from you, and particularly for the petition which you have lately determined to present to parliament in our behalf.

We hope this petition will have its due weight with the legislature ; at all events, it will remain a lasting monument of your liberality and patriotism.--Indeed we are convinced that you long regretted, though you did not feel in your own persons the weight of the absurd prejudices which disturbed, and still continue to disturb, the harmony of social life, and to divide the people of Ireland into distinct, and almost hostile communities. We now, however, look with confidence for a melioration of national manners ; and we hope your example will induce others to lay aside their animosities against us, and

to accept the friendship which we are ambitious to cultivate with our countrymen of every religious denomination.

Notwithstanding the calumnies which are daily propagated to our disadvantage, and the insidious arts which bad men employ to keep one part of Ireland in a state of sullen separation from the other, we venture to prognosticate the approach of that auspicious day, when the people of this country, moulded into one common mass by the compressing hand of the same protecting system, shall cease to have any other object in view than the public good and public happiness.

Among the various descriptions of men whom Providence has placed in the same country, there are features of moral distinction, as well as of moral resemblance, and yet the business of society is carried on under all the known varieties of temper, opinion, and ability : in the same manner we conceive that a difference of sentiment, with regard to religious doctrines and modes of worship, would not be likely to impair the strength and unity of the state. There is one point in which we all agree—the civil and political welfare of our country ; and by this point do the Roman Catholics wish to be connected with their countrymen, in a common bond of fellowship and constitutional right.

We feel no political insufficiency or defect which should exclude us, in any respect, from the bosom of our country, and we are happy to find that you view us in the same light. Resting on this proof of your liberality, we trust, however, that you will not charge us with any degeneracy of spirit, if, willing to gratify the prejudices, which are still to be found among many of our countrymen, we solicit admission into the constitution, on such terms as shall offer as little violence as possible, to the feelings of men, who think that every change is an hazardous experiment, and that every link taken from the chain of oppression is likely to produce anarchy instead of order, public tumult instead of public security.

The object of our present application is therefore a partial admission only to the rights of free subjects, but if our success should go beyond our expectations, we shall feel a more lively sense of gratitude to those, who with such a superiority to prejudice have declared us worthy of total emancipation.

If we have ventured to call the attention of our country to our serious and manifold grievances, it is not to kindle civil discord, but to strengthen the bonds of civil union, and to give to our Protestant brethren an opportunity of ennobling their own character and that of our common country, by a generous triumph over the jealousies and antipathies which have forced us from our natural rank in society.

Whatever may be our fate, whether we shall be received into the Constitution, or dismissed from its door with disdain, we shall ever retain a grateful remembrance of the patriotic exertions of you and your fellow-citizens in our favor, and we earnestly solicit a continuance of your friendship and patronage. You have set an example of true public spirit to Ireland, and to Europe at large—and we flatter ourselves that you could not have better evinced your love of liberty, than by the means which you have recommended for its conservation; a communication of its blessings to the Roman Catholics of this country.

I am further directed by the General Committee to inform you that, although our oath of allegiance contains in substance an explanation of our tenets and opinions, yet in deference to your advice, we have it under consideration to follow the example of several English Roman Catholics, by making a solemn declaration of our religious principles, as far as they are connected with civil and religious liberty; which we hope will give satisfaction to all, who like you, are open to conviction founded on truth and reason.

I have the honor to be, with the greatest respect,

Yours sincerely,

*Dublin, 4th February, 1792.*

EDWARD BYRNE.

T t



AT a meeting of the General Committee of Roman Catholics, held at the King's Arms, in Fownes's-street, on Saturday the 4th day of February, 1792 :

*EDWARD BYRNE, ESQ. IN THE CHAIR.*

The following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to :

Resolved, That the warmest thanks of this General Committee be given to the inhabitants of Belfast, who with a liberality that does the greatest honor to themselves and to their country, have agreed to present a Petition to Parliament for the repeal of the penal and restrictive statutes under which the Roman Catholics of this kingdom at present labor.

Resolved, That the chairman of this meeting be requested to forward a copy of the above Resolutions to the chairman of the Belfast meeting, accompanied with a letter, expressive of our gratitude to him and his fellow-citizens.

EDWARD BYRNE, CHAIRMAN.

#### EXECUTION OF THE LAW BY THE CIVIL POWER.

*April 14, 1792.*

ON Thursday morning last, a detachment of the Belfast First Volunteer Company, marched at the request of the sheriff of this county, in order to aid him in taking possession of a house and farm, in the townland of Derrymore, and barony of Upper-Massereene, which was forcibly withheld. The party marched at six o'clock in the morning, with one of the company's field pieces, a brass six-pounder, and arrived at the spot, distant 20 miles, about two o'clock. Upwards of an hour having been spent in fruitless entreaties and remonstrances, to prevail upon the deluded people to give up the possession peaceably, and every proposal of representing their conduct in the most favourable point of view, to the proprietor of the lands, having been rejected ; at three o'clock the sheriff ordered the corps to fire upon the house, which was occupied by a considerable body of very desperate banditti, in support

of the possessors. A hot action immediately commenced, in which the occupiers made every exertion, as well by a continued fire from the house, as by sallies, and annoying the party from the hedges. The assailants, however, rapidly advanced, and kept up a well directed fire from the artillery and small arms: about four o'clock, the house, though very strong, having been much shattered, the occupiers, who had retired in the rear, began to make their escape in different directions; about ten of the most timid, who were the first in flying, got off in a boat over Loughneagh, some others escaped by land, but four of the ring-leaders, including two of the people who held the possession, were apprehended, and delivered over to the magistrates and constables of the district, in order to be sent to the county gaol. Thus a decided conquest has been obtained by the corps over the opposers of the laws of the land, in one of the wildest and most lawless districts in this part of the kingdom.

It gives us much pleasure to announce, that in the execution of this important business, no individual was materially hurt. The detachment returned to Lisburn on Thursday evening, having marched upwards of thirty-two miles, and arrived here yesterday morning, without the slightest injury or accident having happened to any individual.

The parties who held the possession forcibly, were not the descendants of the former occupiers, who had been tenants at will, but distant relations, who obtruded themselves upon the premises, and who had no claim on the inheritance, either in law, equity, or benevolence.

The sheriff could not, on this occasion, obtain aid from the army, without a certificate of his incapacity to enforce the law with the civil power—and such a certificate, it was thought, would not only be disgraceful to the County of Antrim, but would tend to the extension of the infamous Police Bill, to this quarter of the kingdom.

TO WADDEL CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

CAPTAIN OF THE BELFAST FIRST VOLUNTEER COMPANY.

SIR,

I REQUEST you will accept, and have the goodness to present, my warmest thanks to the other members of the First Company, for the very kind and honourable support I have experienced from you in the execution of the law : I am altogether unable to say how much I feel personally the obligation, from the flattering manner of it, or how much I admired the steady perseverance of the Company through a march of forty miles, and a service both hazardous and fatiguing. I know the object of the Company was to enforce the law ; and rely that this proof of their zeal and resolution, by making it evident that resistance must be ineffectual, will in future prevent it ; and I am persuaded that on this occasion, you have rendered a fresh and highly essential service to your country.

I remain, Sir, your obliged,

And most obedient humble servant,

ALEX. McNEILL,

Under-sheriff of the County Antrim.

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COUNTY OF ANTRIM.

AT a General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, held at Antrim, in and for the county of Antrim, the 19th of April, 1792, the Justices then and there assembled, did unanimously resolve that the thanks of the Bench be returned to Waddel Cunningham, Esq. and the First Belfast Volunteer Company, under his command, for their manly and spirited exertions in the support of the laws, having marched twenty miles with artillery and small arms, to assist the sheriff of said county in executing a writ of Habere on the lands of Derrymore, in the upper half barony of Massereene, in the possession of Patrick Corr and others, who with an armed force, not only opposed the said sheriff in the execution of his office, but on the ap-



proach of the volunteers, commenced a heavy and constant fire from behind hedges, and also from a dwelling-house on said lands, which last they defended after a considerable part was battered down and till finally carried by assault.

Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of the Bench be returned to Mr. Alexander McNeill, Under Sheriff of said county, for his spirited and proper conduct on the above occasion.

By Order of the Court,  
SAMUEL HERON,  
Acting Clerk of the Peace.

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#### POLISH REVOLUTION.

ON the 3d May, 1792, being the anniversary of the Revolution of Poland, a numerous and very respectable company of gentlemen, dined together at the Donegall-Arms Inn, in this town, in order to commemorate that happy event.—Waddell Cunningham, Esq. was appointed Chairman, and amongst others, the following Toasts were given.—

The Revolution in Poland, and its Patriot King.—The Revolution of France.—The Rights of Man, and Mr. Paine.—The Sovereignty of the People.—The King of Ireland.—The Prince of Wales.—May Philosophy enlighten all Nations, and form the whole into one vast family. The Constituting and Legislative Assemblies of France. The American Congress, and the illustrious Washington.—Lord Charlemont and the Volunteers of Ireland.—15th February, 1782.—The Society for the abolition of the Slave Trade.—The Revolution Society of London.—The Conquerors of the French Bastile.—The Memory of all good citizens who have fallen in the cause of Liberty.—The Liberty of the Press.—Mr. Fox, and success to his Bill, for rendering truth no longer a libel.—Mr. Grattan, and the minority of the House of Commons of Ireland.—An equal Representation of the People of Ireland, in Parliament.

--James Napper Tandy, and a speedy check to unconstitutional and undefined privileges.—May the People of Ireland be united, and all enjoy equal Liberty.—Magna Charta, and the Barons of Runnymede.—An hearty drubbing to the King of Hungary, and all the enemies of France.—May we be speedily called upon to celebrate the emancipation of all the enslaved nations of the world.

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May, 18, 1792.

THE Belfast Second Society of United Irishmen, at a meeting on Tuesday evening, unanimously resolved on contributing their share of money to assist the people of France in the present war, undertaken in support of the new constitution of that country--and that they will continue so to do while the present war, in defence of the liberties of mankind, may last.

At a general meeting of the Northern Whig Club, held on the 15th June, 1792, (Anniversary of Magna Charta):

*EDWARD JONES AGNEW, ESQ, IN THE CHAIR,*

The following resolutions were unanimously agreed to:

That we have observed with pleasure, the introduction and success of a bill in the House of Commons of Great Britain, declaratory of the power of Juries in matters of libel.

That it is our ardent wish, that a bill for the same purpose may be carried through the two Houses of Legislature in Ireland, and become the law of this land.

That we highly admire Mr. Fox, that steady friend to civil and religious liberty, as the original mover in the British House of Commons of a bill so long wanted, to settle the intent of the law, by making its spirit and practice agree; as well as Earl Camden, for the ability and consistency with which he supported it in its progress through the House of Lords.

Admiring, as we do, the principles and structure of our

Constitution, we think it incumbent on us to express our ardent wish, that it may soon be rendered as perfect *de facto*, as it is *de jure*; or, in other words, that the people may speedily come to be fairly and equally represented in the Legislature of both kingdoms.

EDW. J. AGNEW.

#### NATIONAL MUSIC OF IRELAND.

A RESPECTABLE body of the inhabitants of Belfast having published a plan for reviving the ancient music of this country, and the project having met with such support and approbation as must insure success to the undertaking, Performers on the Irish Harp are requested to assemble in this town, on the tenth day of July next, when a considerable sum will be distributed in premiums, in proportion to their respective merits.

It being the intention of the committee that every performer shall receive some premium, it is hoped that no Harper will decline attending on account of his having been unsuccessful on any former occasion.

ROBT. BRADSHAW,

*Belfast, April 26, 1792.*

SECRETARY AND TREASURER.

#### NATIONAL MUSIC OF IRELAND.

JULY 13, 1792.

THE number of Harpers that were present in our Exchange Rooms on Wednesday last, and who are to continue to assemble in the same place for three days longer, were ten;—a sufficient proof of the declining state of that simple but expressive instrument, and of the propriety of holding out every lure to prevent the original music of this country from being lost. As a principal motive in this undertaking was to revive some of the most ancient airs, now nearly obsolete, their dates and authors perhaps for centuries unknown, pains will be ta-



ken to reduce to notes such of those that have been played on this occasion, as may lead to a general publication of the best sets of our tunes. No one that remembers the exquisite finger of Dominic, will hesitate to confess the capability of the Harp of Ireland, and how worthy it is of preservation. By such means alone can our national airs be saved from oblivion. Wales and Ireland have a national music, while England has none; if she had, it would not, like that of the two first countries, be only in the hands of a few itinerant minstrels.

The following is the order in which the Harpers played :

Dennis Dempsy, blind, from the county of Derry, aged 86.

Arthur O'Neill, blind, from the county of Tyrone, aged 55.

Charles Fanning, from the county of Cavan, aged 56.

Dan. Black, blind, from the county of Derry, aged 75.

Charles Byrne, from the county of Leitrim, aged 80.

Hugh Higgins, blind, from the county of Mayo, aged 55.

Pat. Quin, blind, from the county of Armagh, aged 70.

W. Carr, from the county of Armagh, aged 15.

Rose Mooney, blind, from the county of Meath.

Jas. Duncan, from the county of Down, aged 45.

The Irish Harpers were succeeded by a Welsh one, whose execution was very great. The contrast between the plaintive tones of the Irish instrument, and the bold martial ones of the Welsh, had a pleasing effect; and marked a difference of character between the two nations.

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JULY FOURTEENTH, 1792.

#### BELFAST REVIEW—AND CELEBRATION OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

ON Friday evening, the several country corps marched into town, and were billeted on the inhabitants; who were happy in renewing expressions of affection for their neighbours and friends in the fourteenth year since the commencement of reviews, and in the sixteenth of the volunteer æra.

Assemblies of smaller bodies than formerly, having been deemed best calculated to preserve at present the military spirit among the citizen-soldiery of Ireland, another review is to be held on Broughshane Moor on the first of August. The number of corps which would otherwise have attended at Belfast having been thus considerably reduced, it was not thought proper to call on the venerable General of the Volunteer Army of Ulster, the Earl of Charlemont, to attend on this occasion; but the Reviewing General, who acted in his room, was requested by the committee to make a regular return to his Lordship of their numbers, state of discipline, &c. The gentleman appointed in his place was Colonel Sharman, of Moira Castle, who presided with such dignity last year in the civil assembly of the inhabitants of Belfast and its neighbourhood, at the celebration of the French Revolution. An unexpected illness having prevented that justly admired character from filling an office for which he was so eminently qualified, Major Crawford, of Crawford's-burn, was unanimously nominated to act as Reviewing General; in testimony of the respect due to decided virtue in public and private life.

On Saturday morning, a brigade was formed in High-street, extending from the Bank to the Quay; and the whole were marched off to the old review ground in the Falls, at about eleven o'clock, by the Exercising Officer, Major Mc-Manus.

On their return to town, at three o'clock, there was a Grand Procession, the order of which is mentioned underneath, and feu de joyes were fired in Linen-hall-street by the whole body, in honour of that day, which presented the sublime spectacle of near one-sixth of the whole inhabitants of Europe bursting their chains, and throwing off, almost in an instant, the degrading yoke of slavery.

## ORDER OF THE MILITARY AND CIVIL PROCESSION.

MAJOR CRAWFORD, GENERAL AND PRESIDENT

FOR THE DAY.

Belfast Troop of Light Dragoons, Captain Thomas Brown—17.

MAJOR M'MANUS, EXERCISING-OFFICER,

and his Aides de Camps.

Artillery of the Belfast First Company, their number  
included in that of their corps undermentioned.

*The colors of five free nations: viz.*

Flag of Ireland—motto, 'Unite and be free.'

Flag of America—motto, 'The Asylum of Liberty.'

Flag of France—motto, 'The Nation, the Law, and  
the King.'

Flag of Poland—motto, 'We will support it.'

Flag of Great Britain—motto, 'Wisdom, Spirit, and  
Liberality to the People.'

A Flag was prepared for the Dutch, (but no one could be  
found to bear it) who were to be represented by a piece of  
*common* woollen stuff, half hoisted on a pole, and to be hoot-  
ed by the populace; on account of the States having joined  
the wicked conspiracy of tyrants against the liberties of man;—

MOTTO,

'Heav'ns! how unlike their Belgian sires of old!'

Portrait of Dr. Franklin—motto. 'Where Liberty is,  
*there is my country.*'

|                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------|-----|
| Belfast First Company, Captain Cunningham, | 102 |
| Muckamore Fuziliers, Captain Swan,         | 42  |
| Larne, Captain Lieutenant Farrel,          | 40  |
| Randalstown, Captain Dickey,               | 80  |
| Moirs, Captain Bateman,                    | 75  |
| Dromore First Company, Captain Vaughan,    | 42  |
| Villa Independents, Captain Hamilton,      | 30  |



|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Ballynahinch, Captain Armstrong, | 104 |
|----------------------------------|-----|

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Total number of First Brigade | 532 |
|-------------------------------|-----|

Artillery of Belfast Blues (numbers included in those of their corps in Second Brigade.)

### THE GREAT STANDARD,

Elevated on a triumphal car, drawn by four horses, with two Volunteers as supporters, containing on one side of the canvass a representation of

### THE RELEASEMENT OF THE PRISONERS FROM THE BASTILE.

Motto—'Sacred to Liberty.'

The reverse contained a figure of Hibernia, one hand and foot in shackles; a Volunteer presenting to her a figure of Liberty.—Motto,

'For a people to be free, it is sufficient that they  
WILL IT.'

|                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| Belfast Blues, Captain William Brown,  | 92 |
| Downpatrick, Captain Hawthorne,        | 34 |
| Dromore Light Infantry, Captain Bodle, | 34 |
| Carrickfergus, Captain Craig,          | 36 |
| Broughshane, Captain Duffin,           | 62 |

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Total number of Second Brigade, | 258 |
|---------------------------------|-----|

Total number of both brigades, 790.

Portrait of Mons. Mirabeau—Motto,

'Can the African Slave Trade, though morally wrong, be politically right?'

A considerable number of inhabitants, 180, from Carmoney and Templepatrick, formed part of the procession, falling in at the rear of the volunteer body. They bore a green flag, with the following mottoes—

‘ Our Gallic brother was born July 14, 1789 ; Alas ! we are still in embryo.’ — Reverse, — ‘ Superstitious jealousy, the cause of the Irish Bastile ; — let us unite and destroy it !’

The whole moved forward in the order related, through the principal streets of the town, accompanied by such an immense multitude as never before appeared in this place. After the three *feu de joyes*, the body of volunteers and citizens entered the great square, within the Linen-hall, and having formed a circle, elevated in the centre of which sat the President, Major Crawford —

Mr. Wm. Sinclair moved an Address to the National Assembly of France, inserted afterwards. After some deliberation, but without the slightest appearance of opposition, it was carried without a single dissentient voice ; and with such energetic bursts of applause as declared that its principles had the sanction of every understanding, in an assembly of about 1500, according to the *Belfast News-letter*, or 5,000 according to the *Star*, that thus beheld the triumph of human nature in the freedom of France. It may with great confidence be asserted, that in no spot in Europe has the French Revolution been celebrated with more splendor, seriousness, and feeling, than in the town of Belfast, if we except the very country where that astonishing event took place.

The particular business of the day being thus happily disposed of, the former mover proposed an address to the People of Ireland, inserted underneath. A long debate took place, which did not terminate till seven o’clock in the evening ; turning upon a motion by Mr. Joy, for expunging the following paragraph which stands part of the address, and inserting another in its room.

We shall underneath recite both of them, in order that the transactions of the meeting may be known in all its parts to those who were not auditors.

## PARAGRAPH, THE EXPUNGEMENT OF WHICH WAS MOVED FOR.

“ But while we thus state our sentiments on the subject of reform, we feel it incumbent upon us to declare, as we now do, that no reform, were even such attainable, would answer our ideas of utility or justice, which should not equally include all sects and denominations of Irishmen. We reprobate and abhor the idea, that political inequality should result from religious opinions; and we should be ashamed, at the moment when we are seeking for liberty ourselves, to acquiesce in any system founded on the slavery of others.”

## PARAGRAPH PROPOSED IN PLACE OF THE FORMER.

“ In seeking redress of our own grievances, we should be unworthy of the blessing of a free constitution, did we, under the influence either of religious or political prejudice, desire to deprive any body of men of their due weight in the government of their country. On this principle we have uniformly rejoiced in the gradual emancipation of our Roman Catholic brethren; and we ardently look forward to that day when their entire enfranchisement shall be a measure not only of safety, but of expediency; when Protestants shall be ready to grant, and Catholics to receive. Whatever shall tend to accelerate that event will have our most strenuous support, as we shall zealously co-operate with the rest of the inhabitants of Ireland, in the attainment of an object so devoutly to be wished!”

Mr. Joy, after mentioning that the idea of a gradual emancipation of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, had had for many years his best wishes, took the liberty to allege that it were not adviseable for the meeting to declare to the world, that “ no reform would answer their ideas of justice and utility which should not equally include all sects and denominations of Irishmen.” That on a subject involving so momentous an experiment, their language though firm, should be moderate and precise; such as to foster the growing sentiment of liber-



ality among our protestant brethren, who are yet unprepared to go hand and hand with the inhabitants of this place in an instantaneous and unlimited change. That neither the Protestant mind was sufficiently prepared to grant, nor the Catholic one universally prepared to receive, a plenary and immediate exercise of every right which members of a state can possibly possess. That, therefore, holding it forth on such an extended scale, might rather widen than close the unhappy chasm which had long separated the two bodies; and that an union among Protestants on this subject, would be highly desirable, as an essential means of serving the very cause in question.

In defence of the paper, as it originally stood, and was carried, it was said, that its expressions were so guarded that no point of time for their liberation was even hinted at. To this it was replied by Mr. Joy, that the passage for that very reason was objectionable and carried its own condemnation; as a solemn address from such a public body as was then assembled, should be clear and explicit; whereas this part of it was ambiguous and equivocal. That it should ingenuously declare either a wish to behold an immediate and complete enfranchisement, or one gradual and progressive; as that style of writing which the dignity of so great a popular meeting demanded.

Mr. S. Neilson expressed his astonishment at hearing that, or any part of the address, called a Catholic question! to his understanding it no more presented a Roman Catholic question than a Church question, a Presbyterian, a Quaker, an Anabaptist, or a Mountain question; the true question, if any, was, whether *Irishmen should be free*.

Rev. Mr. Kelburn rose to oppose the amendment, upon the grounds of right, reason and justice, and illustrated his reasoning by a comparison to the case of one man's having got possession of the purse of another, the detention of which,

he was willing to allow, was unjust, but would tell him,—  
 “Friend, I have kept this purse so long from you, that it is impossible you should not be out of humour; therefore I cannot answer for the use you might make of it: I must wait till I am sure you are pleased and satisfied, and the way I shall take to quiet you is this; first, I shall consider your case, and perhaps I shall give you the promise of a guinea out of your purse next week, if not sooner, and, if you please me, I shall perhaps give you more some other time, may be all; and if you should be dead, I can, you know, as well give it to your children. You cannot now, from the nature of things, be in any capacity to receive it, therefore, for the present, be thankful for what you get, and the man who advises you to the contrary, is a seditious bad man.”

He concluded by observing, that he had listened with wonder and amazement to all that had been said about giving and receiving; he wished that men, before they indulged in all the munificent ostentation of bestowing so liberally, would reflect a moment upon what they had to give, that their generosity might be measured by their means. Poor simple people! what have you to give?—If I have summed it right, the whole inventory of your possessions amounts to no more than this—your rotten constitution, your boroughs, your excise, your pension-list, your taxes, and your tythes; these are your inheritance. Truly it is time to quit this foolery about giving, and join hands and voices with your brethren, to recover the birth-right which you both have lost.

Mr. Thompson then rose—He observed that the question of right had been established by such irrefragable arguments, (alluding to those of Mr. Kelburn) that he should consider it as admitted, and confine himself to that of expediency, which seemed the only ground of opposition now existing; and he would weigh expediency against expediency. It was not only expedient, but absolutely necessary, that every Irishman who

wished for reform and for freedom, should closely unite, and cease to be divided by names, which only rendered them contemptible to their oppressors. When 70,000 men were up in arms, and demanded a reform, and often tried to obtain it, they as-often tried in vain ;—why ? because there was no union amongst Irishmen. When any proposition was brought forward in parliament, favourable to the general liberty, it was the subject of ridicule and contempt to both parties—the parliament treated it with derision, because it wanted the energy, that unanimity alone could give it, and the Roman Catholics themselves laughed at an attempt so impotent and abortive.

The Rev. T. Birch, of Saintfield, said, he was very much astonished to hear such talk of liberality and concessions, whilst we were criminally unjust, as well as impolitic, in withholding their rights from our Catholic brethren. He would rather, he said, transport himself to Botany Bay, than live in a country which continued to keep itself in abject slavery, by its internal divisions.

Counsellor Stewart, in support of the amendment, argued, that it was unfair that an address should go abroad as the voice of the people, when such numbers were strongly averse to a great part of it. Certainly he said, there were many who might, after a little time, and by gentle degrees, be persuaded to yield up their prejudices, and many who wished well to the cause, as he himself did, who had their fears, and their habits of associating danger, with the idea of immediate emancipation. To disgust this portion of the citizens, by any precipitate resolutions, could not fail to be dangerous—it would only be to make enemies of those who were in the way to become friends, and, by creating unnecessary divisions, ruin the general cause. It would be much wiser, by tempering our measures to the actual state of affairs, and the general mind, to endeavour to bring with us all descriptions of men. By so do-



ing, the cause would be all powerful; at present there was bigotry on both sides. There were bigoted Catholics as well as bigoted Protestants—till this bigotry could be overcome, it would be in vain to look for union—Mr. Stewart, however, concluded his speech, which was of considerable length, with expressing his sentiments strongly in favor of liberality, and his abhorrence of any thing like oppression or unnecessary restriction.

Mr. Getty rose to order, and added a few words in answer to what had been argued, respecting the state of the public mind. No later, he observed, than the session before last, no man was found bold enough to bring forward any proposition in parliament favorable to the Catholics—how great a change has there happened between that period and the present day—see also how much the inhabitants of this town and its neighbourhood have changed their minds. At last year's commemoration, even the amendment proposed by Mr. Joy, and the learned gentleman's arguments, in support of that amendment, would have been measures in favor of universal liberty, too strong to have been attempted with any prospect of success. From which short review of the dispositions of parliament and people, it was a necessary inference, that the public mind would rapidly fall in with the sense of this assembly, that all fears on that head were groundless, and that we were warranted in venturing to declare our sentiments boldly, and trusting for proselytes to the justice of the cause.

Counsellor Sampson begged the indulgence of being heard, while he endeavoured shortly to express his approbation of the address, as moved by Mr. Sinclair, and his reasons for approving it. He found himself in that assembly almost accidentally, and as to the question before it, he stood unconnected with any party, or with any person; nor had ever heard or seen the address, till that moment. He had been led, from the rumor of the day, to expect something rather intemperate,

but was pleased to find in the address to the people of Ireland, no more than he, as a man, tolerably free from prejudices upon such subjects, could willingly and warmly assent to. That no reform could answer the purposes of utility or justice, but such as included all Irishmen willing to be free, and that we should blush to accept of any system founded on the slavery of others, was a liberal and general sentiment of generosity and benevolence which he would be ashamed to dissent from. But there was another point started by the amendment, and supported by some argument, upon which he was not so well prepared to give either his vote or his opinion, which was the necessity of gradual emancipation to our brother Catholics. He was as far from embracing that sentiment as he was from opposing it, but he would hesitate about giving his voice, which, however humble, would go forth as one individual in that aggregate, which it was plain, would be the majority of the assembly, if he conceived himself thereby involved in a question, which, important and interesting as it was, he had not sufficiently considered. He hoped if he should ever be present where that question was the real point of discussion, to be better able to give his sentiments; and if by fair argument and reason, some difficulties which appeared to him at present, could be dispelled, he would be as warm to support that point, as he was now to support the address. Meantime, for want of having sufficiently thought on the subject, and of the habit of speaking publicly, he despaired of making any impression, and would content himself with voting against the amendment, because he could not see in the address, any necessity for amendment, and because it provoked a discussion, which he did not think very properly introduced, either as to time or place, and which the address as it stands, was more wisely and temperately calculated to avoid.

Doctor Caldwell, of Magherafelt, delivered his sentiments in so low a tone of voice, that we could not distinctly hear

him—he seemed principally to dwell on the absurdity of celebrating the emancipation of twenty-five millions of Frenchmen, twenty-two millions of whom are Catholics, and yet hesitate to aid in the emancipation of three millions of our fellow-subjects, of the same persuasion. Those who were within hearing of the Doctor, speak in warm terms of the manly good sense displayed in his speech.

Rev. Dr. Dickson, of Portaferry, addressed the assembly in a speech replete with such strong sense and keen irony, as renders us unable to give our readers an adequate conception of it. He was happy to find, by the confession of gentlemen themselves, that there was no difference of opinion, as to the point of justice; the question rested in expediency. Gentlemen had abruptly hauled in the word Catholic, where no such people had been talked of, and spoke of something which they called gradual emancipation; the words sounded like something; yet what was their meaning?—no man had pointed out how, when, or where this ladder was to be formed, by which three millions of men were to mount to liberty?—What was the first step?—How many were there?—What was the interval between them?—He would suppose this ladder to be the penal code, which was to be gradually abolished statute by statute, section by section, sentence by sentence, or rather to meet the gradual progression of gentlemen's ideas, he would suppose, letter by letter. But when was the emancipation to commence?—Was it to begin to-morrow, next month, next year, next century, or haply in the next world? Gentlemen had also talked of the incapacity of the Catholics to receive liberty, from their ignorance; if they were ignorant, it must be owing to the wild system of our laws; but he denied the fact. There was no such ignorance or incapacity in them; wherever the law allowed them to exercise their functions, they did it very much in the ordinary way; they make and wear their own clothes as we do, they understand and prac-



tise the cultivation of the land as well as we do, they excel in all the common arts as well as we do; and do we not see them quit the humble paths of life to prove themselves an ingenious and commercial people, as well as bending their minds to the study of philosophy, the useful branches of literature, and the fine arts, as successfully as we do? If we look back to the publications of the last twelve months, produced by members of that body, Protestants may find ample reason to blush on a comparison. In what respect then have they indicated that want of capacity which we have been so liberally proposing to impart to them, before they can become fit for the enjoyment of freedom? And what is meant by the word gradual? Are they to ascend in a determinate or indeterminate length of time to this degree of capacity? Is it to come to pass in this generation, or is it to be postponed till a future one, till by intermarrying with the wise and capable Protestants, and particularly with us Presbyterians, they may mend the breed, and produce a race of beings who will inherit a capacity from us? But since they are at present so deficient, why do not some of the gentlemen who are now exercising their brilliant talents in opposing their emancipation, proceed to illuminate their minds, and out of the overflowing superabundance of their knowledge and ability, part with a little modicum to enlighten the darkness, and fill up the mental deficiency of the Catholics of Ireland? Let it still, however, be remembered, that we can do no more in this assembly than express our own sentiments—we do not dictate to any other people, nor is it in the power of this assembly, to say that the Catholics ever shall be free, still less, when they shall be so; but this good effect will result from our resolutions, that going abroad into the country, they will stir up the spirit of inquiry; for men who now differ widely from us, will be led by curiosity to inquire, by what reasons and upon what principles the inhabitants of Belfast and its vicinity, who are known to be

men of sense and independence, who cultivate their understandings, and hold a considerable intercourse with mankind, have taken up their mode of thinking? And they, in their turn, will be gradually emancipated from the slavery of prejudice, and bigotry, and their reason and their consciences having fair play, they may become as enlightened as they seem to think it necessary their brethren should be.

The issue of the debate was, that the motion for expunging was lost by a great majority, the dissentients being confined to a very small number; and that the address, as originally proposed, became the act of the assembled body.

The evening closed with an entertainment, at the Donegall Arms, where 104 persons sat down at dinner, when the General, who was also President of the day, announced the toasts prepared by a committee; of which the following is a copy.

#### THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY, 1789.

The King of Ireland.—The constitution of France; may it be permanent.—The constituting assembly of France.—The national assembly of France; may wisdom, spirit and decision direct its counsels.—The French army; may an ardent love of their country be held paramount to every other duty in the character of a soldier.—Confusion to the enemies of French liberty.—May the glorious revolution of France teach the governments of the earth wisdom.—May the example of one revolution prevent the necessity of others.—Lasting freedom and prosperity to the United States of America.—The people of Poland, and success to their arms.—The rights of man; may all nations have wisdom to understand, and spirit to assert them.—The union of Irishmen, without which we can never be free.—The sovereignty of the people, acting by a just and equal representation.—The liberty of the Press.—The Volunteers of Ireland, and their revered General, Earl of Charlemont.—The constitutional societies of Great Britain and Ireland.—The society for the abolition of the Slave Trade.—Presi-

dent Washington.—Stanislaus Augustus, may his example be imitated.—Mr. Paine; may perverted eloquence ever find so able an opposer.—Mr. Fox and the rights of juries, in substance as well as form.—Mr. Grattan, and the minority of the Irish House of Commons.—The literary characters, who have vindicated the rights of man, and may genius ever be employed in them.—May all governments be those of the laws, and all laws those of the people.—May the free nations of the world vie with each other in promoting liberty, peace, virtue, and happiness among men.—The encreased, encreasing, and sacred flame of liberty.—Ireland.—The cause of freedom.—The memory of John Locke.—The memory of William Molyneux.—The memory of Dr. Franklin.—The memory of Mirabeau.—The memory of Dr. Price.—The memory of Mr. Howard.

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COPY OF THE ADDRESS

TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FRANCE.

IT is not from vanity or ostentation, that we, the citizens of Belfast, and citizen-soldiers of that town and neighbourhood, take the liberty of addressing the representative majesty of the French people.—We address you, with the rational respect due to a title elevated far above all servile and idolatrous adulation, and with that affectionate fraternity of heart which ought to unite man to man, in a mutual and inseparable union of interests, of duties, and of rights; which ought to unite nation with nation, into one great republic of the world.

On a day, sanctified as this has been, by a declaration of human rights, the germ of so much good to mankind, we meet with joy together, and wish well to France, to her national assembly, to her people, to her armies and to her King.

May you, legislators, maintain by the indefatigable spirit of liberty, that constitution which has been planned by the wisdom of your predecessors, and never may you weary in the



work you have undertaken, until you can proclaim with triumphant security, it is finished! Manifest to an attentive and progressive world, that it is not the phrenzy of philosophy nor the fever of wild and precarious liberty, which could produce such continued agitation; but that imperishable spirit of freedom alone, which always exists in the heart of man, which now animates the heart of Europe, and which in the event, will communicate its energy throughout the world, invincible and immortal!

We rejoice in the sincerity of our souls, that this creative spirit animates the whole mass of mind in France. We auspiciate happiness and glory to the human race, from every great event which calls into activity the whole vigour of the whole community; amplifies so largely the field of enterprize and improvement, and gives free scope to the universal soul of the empire. We trust that you will never submit the liberties of France to any other guarantees, than God, and the right hands of the people.

The power that presumes to modify or to arbitrate with respect to a constitution adopted by the people, is an usurper and a despot, whether it be the meanest of the mob, or the ruler of empires; and if you condescend to negotiate the alteration of a comma in your constitutional code, France from that moment, is a slave. Impudent despots of Europe! Is it not enough to crush human nature beneath your feet at home, that you thus come abroad to disturb the domestic settlement of the nations around you, and put in motion your armies, those enormous masses of human machinery, to beat down every attempt that man makes for his own happiness? It is high time to turn these dreadful engines against their inventors, and organized as they have hitherto been, for the misery of mankind, to make them now the instruments of its glory and its renovation.

Success therefore, attend the Armies of France!

May your soldiers, with whom war is not a trade, but a duty, remember that they do not fight merely for themselves, but they are the advance guard of the world: nor let them imagine that the event of the war is uncertain. A single battle may be precarious, not so a few campaigns.—There is an omnipotence in a righteous cause, which masters the pretended mutability of human affairs, and fixes the supposed inconsistency of fortune. If you will be free, you *MUST*; there is not a chance that one million of resolute men can be enslaved; no power on earth can do it; and will the God of Justice and of Mercy? Soldiers! there is something that fights for you even in the hearts of your enemies. The native energies of humanity rise up in voluntary array against tyrannical and preposterous prejudice, and all the little cabals of the heart, give way to the feelings of nature, of country and of kind.

Freedom and prosperity to the People of France! We think that such revolutions as they have accomplished, are so far from being out of the order of society, that they sprung inevitably from the nature of man and the progression of reason; what is imperfect he has the power to improve; what he has created, he has a right to destroy. It is a rash opposition to the irresistible will of the public, that in some instances has maddened a disposition, otherwise mild and magnanimous, turned energy into ferocity, and the generous and gallant spirit of the French, into fury and vengeance. We trust that every effort they now make, every hardship they undergo, every drop of blood they shed, will render their constitution more dear to them.

Long life and happiness to the King of the French! not the Lord of the soil and its servile appendages, but the King of men, who can reserve their rights, while they entrust their powers. In this crisis of his fate, may he withstand every attempt to estrange him from the nation; to make him an

exile in the midst of France, and to prevent him from identifying himself as a magistrate with the constitution, and as a Frenchman with the people.

We beseech you all as men, as legislators, as citizens and as soldiers, in this your great conflict for liberty for France, and for the world, to despise all earthly danger, to look up to God, and to connect your councils, your arms, and your empire to his throne, with a chain of union, fortitude, perseverance, morality and religion.

We conclude, with this fervent prayer: That as the Almighty is dispersing the political clouds which have hitherto darkened our hemisphere, all nations may use the light of Heaven; that, as in this latter age, the Creator is unfolding in his creatures, powers which had long lain latent—they may exert them in the establishment of universal freedom, harmony and peace—may those who are free, never be slaves—may those who are slaves be speedily free.

[On the motion of Mr. Thompson, the above was to be transmitted to the National Assembly.]

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COPY OF THE

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

WE, the volunteers and other inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Belfast, assembled to commemorate this great day, embrace with earnestness the opportunity which it affords, at once to express our zeal and affection for the cause of liberty in France, and our undisguised opinions on subjects of the last importance to our native land.

Trained from our infancy in a love of freedom, and an abhorrence of tyranny, we congratulate our brethren of France and ourselves, that the infamous conspiracy of slaves and despots, against the happiness and glory of that admired and respected nation, and against the common rights of man, has hitherto proved abortive.



Fixing our view steadily on the great principle of Gallic emancipation, we will not be diverted from that magnificent object, by the accidental tumults or momentary ebullitions of popular fury. We will not estimate the wisdom of her legislators by the transports of a mob; nor the spirit of her armies by the cowardice of a regiment; nor the patriotism of her people by the treachery of individuals; nor the justice of her cause by the numbers of her enemies. We judge with other views and on other principles. We see with admiration, France extending the land-marks of human knowledge in the great art of government, and opening to the world new systems of policy and of justice. We see her renounce all wars on the principle of conquest. We see her propose an universal brotherhood and an eternal peace among the nations. We see her even now, when forced into arms and bloodshed, by the unjust and unprincipled machinations of her enemies, separating, as far as possible, the innocent subjects from the guilty despot; respecting, amidst the horrors of war, the property of individuals; and exempting from interruption the peaceful traffic of the merchant. It is from views like these, that we estimate that stupendous event, the Revolution, which we this day commemorate; not from accidental irregularities, which, while we condemn them, we are compelled to pity, as feeling that they spring not merely from a spirit of licentiousness, but from a sense of injury working on a sanguine people, still galled with the recollection of recent tyranny and oppression, and jealous of liberty, but just recovered, and scarcely yet secure.

Such are our sentiments on the subject of the French Revolution;—we come now to the state of our own country.

Imprest as we are with a deep sense of the excellence of our constitution, as it exists in theory, we rejoice that we are not, like our brethren in France, reduced to the hard necessity of tearing up inveterate abuse by the roots, even where uti-

lity was so intermixed as not to admit of separation.—Ours is an easier and a less unpleasing task ; to remove with a steady and a temperate resolution, the abuses which the lapse of many years inattention and supineness in the great body of the people, and unremitting vigilance in their rulers to invade and plunder them of their rights, have suffered to overgrow and to deform that beautiful system of government, so admirably suited to our situation, our habits, and our wishes. We have not to innovate, but to restore. The just prerogatives of our Monarch we respect and will maintain. The constitutional power of the Peers of the realm we wish not to invade. We know that in the exercise of both, abuses have grown up ; but we also know that those abuses will be at once corrected, so as never again to recur, by restoring to us THE PEOPLE, what we, for ourselves, *demand as our right*, our due weight and influence in that estate, which is our property, the Representation of the People in Parliament.

Thoroughly impressed with the unjust and ruinous inequality of that representation, with the consequent corruption, which pervades all ranks in the state ; with the destruction of the morals, the sacrifice of the commerce, and the hourly and imminent danger to the liberty of our country, we will inflexibly persevere in the pursuit of that great remedy for all our political evils, a parliamentary reform ; a reform temperate, equal and just, which shall restore lustre to the crown, dignity to the peerage, and their due weight and influence to the people of Ireland.

But while we thus state our sentiments on the subject of reform, we feel it incumbent on us to declare, as we now do, that no reform, were even such attainable, would answer our ideas of utility or justice, which should not equally include all sects and denominations of Irishmen. We reprobate and abhor the idea, that political inequality should result from religious opinions ; and we should be ashamed, at the moment

when we are seeking for liberty ourselves, to acquiesce in any system founded on the slavery of others.

We have now declared our sentiments to the world. In declaring them we spurn with equal disdain, restraint, whether proceeding from a mob or a monarch ; from a riot or a proclamation. We look with a mixture of abomination and contempt on the transactions which, on the last anniversary of the French Revolution, degraded the national character of England ; when neither the learning, the piety, the public spirit, nor the private virtue of a Priestley, could protect him from the savage fury of the vilest of an ignorant and a bigoted rabble ; before whom the religion of the country was dishonored, the name of the Sovereign insulted, and all law and order leveled in the dust ; to the disgrace, not less of the integrity of the magistrates who were the fomenters, than of the spirit of the people, who were timid witnesses of the ravage and destruction. As little should we respect any attempt, under color of authority, to fetter down our minds or prevent the publication of our grievances, and our determination to seek redress. In the pursuit of reform, that great measure indispensable to the freedom, the happiness and the glory of our country, we will inflexibly persevere, and for its attainment we rely with confidence on the steadiness, the public spirit and the zealous co-operation of our countrymen.

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AT a meeting of the Belfast Volunteer Company (blue),  
7th September, 1792,

*CAPTAIN BROWN, IN THE CHAIR :*

The following resolutions were unanimously agreed to :

Resolved, That we are happy to see the present revival of volunteering throughout this province, confident that the rights of the people are most secure when they are able to assert them.

That we are firmly persuaded that this country is indebt-



ed to the spirit and wisdom of the volunteers for whatever commerce or constitution it possesses, and that their success was owing to the justness of the principles on which they acted.

That we consider it necessary, at this crisis, for all volunteers to recur to those principles which have stood the test of time, and have become by their universal adoption, sacred and incontrovertible.

That these principles are fully expressed in the resolutions of the first and third Dungannon meetings; and that a strict adherence to them by the old volunteer corps, and the adoption of them by every new corps, is essential to the welfare of Ireland.

That we again declare to our countrymen, and to the world, our firm determination to adhere to the principles contained in the resolutions of the first and third Dungannon meetings; and we warmly recommend to every volunteer corps in the kingdom the adoption of similar declarations. United in sentiment, the volunteers will again become the happy instrument of producing essential benefits to the welfare of their country.

Resolved, That these resolutions be published in the Belfast news-papers; and also in hand-bills; with the resolutions of the first and third Dungannon meetings prefixed, and be dispersed through this province.

Signed by order,

JAMES McCLEAN, *sec.*

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AT A MEETING OF THE  
FIRST BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY,  
HELD AT THE DONEGALL-ARMS, SEPTEMBER 7, 1792;  
MR. HUGH JOHNSON, IN THE CHAIR.

AT this important crisis, which is likely to form a remarkable era in the history of man, when many of the European despots have combined to crush a great nation struggling for

liberty:—At a period when the spirit of volunteering seems to revive in this neighbourhood, we hope it will not be deemed presumptive in us, who first took up arms in the cause of our country, and who have never laid them down, nor slackened in our efforts to promote its prosperity, to declare the principles we hold, relative to the Volunteer Institution of Ireland which we cannot do better than in the words of our own association, and in the following resolutions of the Dungannon meetings of February 1782, and September 1783:

(ASSOCIATION OF THE FIRST BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY.)

“WE, whose names are hereunto subscribed, having associated ourselves together, to learn the military discipline, for defence of ourselves, this town and country, and the support of the Rights of Ireland, under the name of the ‘First Belfast Volunteer Company,’ do plight our faith each to all, to be governed by the voice of the majority in every case that may arise; that we will not withdraw from the company from any other cause than removal or bodily indisposition, and that we will never accept of any wages or reward from government as a volunteer company, or submit to take any military oath or obligation therefrom.”

(DUNGANNON MEETING, FEBRUARY 15, 1782.)

“Resolved, That we hold the right of private judgment in matters of religion, to be equally sacred in others as in ourselves.

“Resolved, therefore, that as men and as Irishmen, as Christians, and as Protestants, we rejoice in the relaxation of the penal laws against our Roman Catholic fellow subjects; and that we conceive the measure to be fraught with the happiest consequences to the union and prosperity of the inhabitants of Ireland.”

(DUNGANNON MEETING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1783.)

“Resolved, that Freedom is the indefeasible birth-right

of Irishmen and Britons, derived from the Author of their being ; and of which no power on earth, much less a delegated power, hath a right to deprive them.

“Resolved, that they only are free, who are governed by no laws but those to which they assent, either by themselves in person, or by their representatives freely chosen, subject to the control, and frequently returning into the common mass of constituents.

“Resolved, that the majority of our House of Commons is not chosen by the People.”

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Resolved unanimously, that the foregoing association and resolutions, form the basis of our creed as citizen-soldiers.

Resolved unanimously, that the foregoing resolutions, passed at the Dungannon meetings—adopted by the whole volunteer army, and by most of the counties in Ireland—we look upon as a standard, by which to judge who are, and who are not, volunteers upon principle: and that we will not associate, or be reviewed with any, if any there be, who are formed on principles opposite thereto.

Resolved unanimously, that we will persevere in the pursuit of an adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament, without distinction on account of religious opinions.

Resolved unanimously, that, venerating order, and abhorring licentiousness, we will be ever ready, as we have heretofore been, to support the Magistrate in the execution of the law, in this neighbourhood.

Signed, by order of the First Belfast Volunteer Company.

HU. JOHNSON, CHAIRMAN.

Resolved unanimously, that these resolutions be published in each of the Belfast newspapers.

JOHN RABB, SEC.



*Belfast, October 2, 1832.*

AT A MEETING OF THE  
FIRST SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN,

*MR. T. MILLIKEN IN THE CHAIR ;*

The following Declaration was unanimously agreed to, and ordered to be published :

THE right of petitioning, that sacred claim of those who suffer, is a natural right which municipal law neither gives nor can take away. Every age, and nation, has recognized it. It has been consecrated in these realms under the sanction of common and statute law ; and it is exerted in Turkey under the sabre of despotism. With respect to the manner of preferring complaint, it would have become those Grand Juries who have confederated against the common right of the subject, to point out any mode by which three millions of people could express their grievances more peaceably than by delegation.

Attached as we are to one favourite principle—the good of the whole—the greatest happiness of the many, it is neither petty political scandal, nor peremptory diction, nor the throng of names, and chorus of corporations, which can divert us from the unity and integrity of our political faith.

To render authority either secure or permanent, it must be established in the affections of the whole people, and we have no scruple in declaring, that without some share of political power, no people, nor any class of people, can have any security of personal freedom, their property, their trade, or their religion. It is so with Protestants—it must be so with Catholics. The self-same principle which makes the former call for a reform, makes the latter anxious for the elective franchise, as a shield from oppression ; and that principle we venerate, whether lodged in the bosom of a Protestant or a Catholic, an African or an American. To circumscribe liberty is to destroy it ; and without free circulation, like the air we

breathe, it loses its spring, stagnates, corrupts, and then issues out from the grand jury rooms, hot and pestiferous, to check the rising prospects of the nation, and to blast the glories of 1782.

As for us, we disclaim, we abhor the idea of establishing a sovereignty over our fellow-citizens. We refuse any share in an ascendancy which claims exclusive and eternal dominion, surmounts law and legislature, and cuts off, with merciless proscription, a whole people from all hope of political equality. The law, in every free country, ought to know no exceptions; but to make the exceptions more general than the rule, is monstrous; and with concern we say, it is Irish policy.

We, who in 1782, pledged our lives and fortunes to gain sovereignty to Ireland, will not, at this day, subscribe to the sovereignty of any party, who under the pretext of religion, disguise political jealousy and the selfishness of monopoly; nor will we dress up any such proud assumption with the attributes of royalty, and with the spoils of our countrymen.— We, who in the hour of danger, and in the face of the enemy, were glad to take the Catholics into our ranks, will not now throw them off as noxious incumbrances, and belying the nature and end of the volunteer institution, blaspheming the writ of Dungannon, set ourselves in array against the very men, whom, the other day, we embraced as brothers.

We who have always asserted the honor, the interest, and internal independence of Ireland to be maintainable only by the freedom, frequency, and power of parliament, will not compliment the abuses of the constitution at the expense of the community; nor will we, with heroic indifference to consistency, pledge life and fortune to the support of a political system in all its branches, while resolutions still tingle in our ears, that without adequate reform, there is no salvation for Ireland. Nor, finally, will we add ourselves to the train of those upstarts in office, who acquire character and importance

abroad, in the same proportion as their country is losing both at home; who swell into unnatural significance by civil dissension, and whose haughtiness increases with, and by, national humiliation. We follow that excellent man whose personal glory is bound up with that of his country; who in this great question, rises above the sordid atmosphere of party, and we beseech him and his liberal coadjutors, though they may, for a time, be unsuccessful, to go on and complete the redemption of a long-suffering people.

We have resolved, and we keep our resolution. We have chosen, and we pursue our choice. We act honestly, and therefore conclude, that we think justly. Let the law judge of our actions, but for our faith we appeal unto God—the God of all mankind, in whose presence there is no ascendancy but that of virtue and justice—distinction of religion, like distinction of colors, is of his ordination. We will never vilify the religion of any man, and far less will we presume to make those varieties of faith, which are perhaps natural and necessary, the engines of civil persecution and political usurpation.

Signed by order of the society,

JAS. HYNDMAN, SEC.

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AT A MEETING OF THE  
THIRD SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN,  
IN THE TOWN OF BELFAST, 3D OCTOBER, 1792,  
MR. CLOT. BIRNIE, IN THE CHAIR:

The following declaration was agreed to, and ordered to be published:

ASSOCIATED as we are, for the purpose of producing union of interest and affection among all the inhabitants of Ireland, we abhor the idea of withholding from our Roman Catholic brethren their civil and religious rights, at the time that we would wish to enjoy those rights ourselves.



We are persuaded that the religion of any man, and his politics, are not necessarily connected: on the contrary, that the former ought not to have any connection with the latter. In a civil view, there undoubtedly is a communion of interests and rights, and that every individual who contributes to the support of the state, ought to have a voice in framing the laws which regulate that state. But religion is personal; the individual alone accountable; we therefore deem it impious to intrude between his conscience and that Almighty Being, who alone knoweth his heart. We assert, that the right of petitioning in the subject, of whatever denomination, is not only natural, but perfectly agreeable to the spirit of our constitution; and we confess ourselves ignorant of any mode by which our Catholic brethren could have so peaceably collected, and expressed their sentiments, as by delegation.

We have seen of late the publications of Grand Juries, which ought to have contained mild and peaceable sentiments, illiberal and ungenerous; directly calculated to sow dissension, and keep up that religious animosity which has so long distracted this island, and subjected it to the ridicule of a foreign administration. Persevere, Catholic brethren! constitutionally persevere! The cause in which you are engaged is natural and virtuous. A cause in which the Catholic and Protestant are equally involved; and whether opposed by wicked administrations, or by silly corporations, whose understandings and hearts are equally frozen, whilst there exists an almighty and righteous Ruler, your exertions will be crowned with success. Our endeavours shall never be wanting to attain the much desired object; and we trust the day will speedily arrive, when Catholic and Protestant, Mahometan and Jew, over the whole world, shall equally enjoy the sacred blessings of freedom and of peace.

DAVID BIGGER, SECRETARY.

AT A MEETING OF THE  
BELFAST SECOND SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN,  
GEORGE-INN, TUESDAY, OCT. 9, 1792,

The following declaration having been laid before them, by their committee, was unanimously agreed to, and ordered to be published :

ASSOCIATED on the principles of humanity, and zealous for her rights, we view with generous indignation, the combinations of despots, to keep her in degradation, and suppress the voice with which she attempts to recite her sufferings, and prefer her claims—Whether those despots be decorated with diadems, arrayed in the livery of a hunting club ; or the petty tyrants of the country, assembled in a jury room, their principles and object are the same in themselves, and to us equally detestable. While we reflect with regret, on the success of despotism in Poland, and execrate with horror its attempts in France, we cannot be insensible to its presumption and audacity in our native land, and the injustice and cruelty which it proposes to perpetuate. We have long seen, and seen with pity, three millions of our brethren degraded from the rank of citizens, and languishing in slavery. We have seen the same three millions peaceable and submissive to, and scrupulously amenable to the laws of their country,—their haughty Lords. Nay, we have seen them forgetful of themselves, their injuries and their insults, armed for the defence of the ungrateful minions who vilify their characters, insult Heaven by pronouncing them incapable of the rights of men, and pledge their lives and fortunes to keep them and their posterity in eternal thralldom.

Captivated with this unparalleled magnanimity, and founding our judgments on the solid basis of character, approved by experience, we pronounced those three millions of our Catholic brethren not only capable of citizenship, but worthy of its blessings. On this foundation, as men of integrity,

we pledged ourselves to our country, and each other, to use our utmost influence to remove the stigma from their character, and the slavery from their persons, of which they have so long and so justly complained, and restore them to a community of privileges and interest, and consequently of affection with their brethren.

We now declare, that we are neither ashamed of our judgment nor sorry for our conduct. The foundation of the one appears more solid, and the propriety of the other more conspicuous, every day. The dignified moderation, the legal precision, generous ardor, and unawed magnanimity of their procedure, demonstrate that they are worthy of our friendship and the freedom of their country. Of that friendship we solemnly assure them, in its utmost extent; and we trust the period is at hand, when the wisdom of the legislature will justify our judgment, sanction the propriety of our conduct, and realize our prospects.

While we thus repeat the avowal of our friendship, and express our trust, we declare at the same time, that the honor, prosperity, peace and happiness of our country, are our great object, and a regard to these our leading principle. Of these, we know, identity of interest, equality of privilege, and harmony of affection, form the only solid base. Neither house nor kingdom, divided against itself, can possibly stand. We, therefore, disclaim all connection with, and attachment to, party or cabal. We reprobate with indignation, the idea of an ascendancy, whose imaginary height depends upon depressing brethren, and plunging them in the depths of servitude and wretchedness. We wish to present the ascendancy, whatever it is, in its true elevation, by restoring all around to its proper level. Nay, we wish to secure to our countrymen, not excepting venal burgesses, self-devoted jurors, and other resolutioners, who volunteer in the cause of human degrada-



tion—those very lives and properties, which they have so rashly pledged themselves, wantonly to throw away.

Lastly, we declare to you, our Catholic Brethren, that we are fully convinced of the justice of your claims, and the legality of your proceedings. Your right of petitioning all or any of the branches of the legislature, is unanimously sanctioned by the voice of common sense, the laws of the land, and the practice even of despotism. Go on, then, generous, though degraded men! Liberty is your object; and ye have long deserved it! Let the love of liberty be your principle, the law your guide, and unanimity your support! Ministers may frown, courtiers intrigue, and juries fulminate proscriptions without end. Be not afraid of them, neither be ye disconcerted. Their frown is insignificance, their intrigues foolishness, and their fulminations, like the showman's flash, from pounded rosin, are only the amusement, or the terror of children. All these will speedily disappear. Your voice, preferring the claims of justice, and supported by reason and sound policy, must, and will be heard. "The night of political ignorance, delusion, and superstition, is far spent; and the day is at hand."—The day, which shall raise you to the dignity of men, and your country to a name among nations. We look forward to its appearance with ardent expectation, and shall hail its presence with hallowed joy. We recognize you with sympathy as brethren, disinherited, proscribed, and alienated, in your native land.

We have pledged ourselves to support your claims of restoration to your natural rights, and we will be faithful to our word.

In this cause, we stand not alone. The brightest ornaments of the senate and the bar, the wise and liberal in every corner of the land, and above all, the eternal principles of reason and justice are mustered on our side. Thus supported we may be disappointed for a season, but cannot despair.

We repeat, "your voice must, and will be heard;" your prayers granted, and your rights restored. The day which shall enrol you in the ranks of fellow-subjects, will give security to the liberties of Irishmen, nerves to their industry, and honor to their name. Till that day, we must continue, as we are, a weak, wretched, and insulted people.

WM. OSBORNE, CHAIRMAN.

WM. MITCHELL, SECRETARY.

AT A MEETING OF THE  
FOURTH SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN

OF BELFAST, OCTOBER 19, 1792 ;

MR. EDWARD KELLY, IN THE CHAIR:

The following declaration was unanimously agreed to, and ordered to be published :

IMPRESSED with benevolent sentiments towards all the human kind, we lament, at this great æra of reform, that there should exist Irishmen, who, living under the enjoyment of constitutional privileges, wish to debar their fellow subjects of the same rights.

Connected as we are with another country, whose aggrandizement has been the destruction of Ireland, we view with astonishment and abhorrence, the weak policy of those men, who, from whatever motives, wish to prevent the Union of Irishmen.

We are satisfied that every individual, in whatever country, and of whatever persuasion, has an equal, natural right in the blessings of the state in which he lives ; we regret that any part of our fellow-subjects should be deprived of those blessings ;—and we do sincerely lament that Protestants whether under the garb of religion or policy, should even dare to wish for a continuation of such slavery.

We congratulate our Catholic brethren, on the appearance of that happy period, when the general interests of this

island will be the only object in view among all its inhabitants; when Catholic and Protestant will be mutually concerned in one common cause; when religious opinions shall no longer debar a subject from the enjoyment of civil rights.

The just claim which every subject has, to prefer his petition to the legislature, for a redress of those grievances under which he labors, we believe, need not now be disputed. We admire the wisdom and modesty of our Catholic brethren, in the mode which they adopted of preferring this claim; and we feel ourselves peculiarly happy in assuring them of our uniform co-operation, and decided support in the attainment of an object that so much concerns the general good.

Some late publications no further merit our attention, than by urging us to declare our utter abhorrence of the sentiments they contain, in order to dissuade weak minds from adhering to such assertions, to force men to think for themselves, unfettered by grand juries or corporations—to act a just part, and leave the consequence to the Supreme Disposer of events.

At this remarkable period, we do most heartily rejoice with all the friends of liberty, at the downfall which tyranny has received in France—a downfall, natural indeed!—in which the inhabitants of Ireland as well as France, are interested; and we hail that happy day, when despotism, under whatever mask, over the whole earth will receive a similar fate—and the standard of liberty be erected in its stead.

ISRAEL MILLIKEN, SEC.

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#### BELFAST VOLUNTEERS.

BY command of the committees of our respective corps, jointly convened by summons, we request the attendance of all their members in full uniform, at the White Linen-Hall, tomorrow, precisely at 12 o'clock, for the purpose of expressing



their joy at the success of the arms of the French Republic, by firing three feu de joyes.

The volunteers request the attendance of their fellow-citizens, at the Donegall-Arms, at seven o'clock said evening, to join with them in declaring their sentiments on this auspicious event.

*Monday, 29th October, 1792.*

HU. M'ILWAIN, Sec. Belfast Troop.

JOHN RABB, Sec. First Belfast Vol. Com.

JAMES M'CLEAN, Sec. Belfast Vol. Com.

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*Belfast, November 2, 1792.*

AGREEABLY to a late advertisement, the successes of the French were celebrated on Tuesday by the volunteers and citizens of Belfast, with that warmth of affection which they generally display in every good cause.

The two volunteer artillery companies, and the two infantry corps, assembled about two o'clock, and fired three feu de joyes, in honor of the day, on which a Duke and a King at the head of an armed host, ingloriously deserted the field, after a campaign which, both in point of design and execution, was as disgraceful to the arms of Austria and Prussia, as its object was detestable and unjust.

In the evening, a numerous meeting was held at the Donegall-Arms, consisting of volunteer citizens, and citizens unarmed, in pursuance of an advertisement requesting an assembly of the inhabitants; when the following declaration was unanimously agreed to:

*MR. S. M'TIER IN THE CHAIR:*

WE, the inhabitants of Belfast, with hearts overflowing with joy, again assemble together, publicly to declare our happiness at the glorious success of the French arms, against innumerable hosts of enemies—the enemies of the human race—and their final expulsion from the Gallic territories: an e-

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vent by which every obstacle to the complete establishment of civil and religious liberty, is removed from that hallowed land—an event which secures liberty to surrounding nations.

Sanguine as our opinions were of the invincible power of a nation of freemen, opposed to the armed slaves of tyrants, yet the event has surpassed our fondest expectations.

When we contemplate the treachery of the executive power, the perfidy of officers, the disorganized state of the army—when we consider the combination of formidable enemies, with generals of the first military abilities at the head of veteran troops, yet observe, that these armies have not been capable of achieving a single important object, credibility is almost staggered, but the world has witnessed it. We cannot help attributing the success of the French arms to the signal interposition of the Deity, as an example of the success with which he will crown the efforts of mankind, in every attempt to establish civil and religious liberty; and we fervently implore the influence of the Divine Spirit, to guide the councils of the national convention in perfecting the great work in which they are engaged, so as to render it productive of happiness to millions yet unborn.

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The town was almost universally illuminated. Every thing demonstrated sincere pleasure in the disgrace of two tyrannical courts, that attempted to dragoon an united nation into that deplorable state of spiritual as well as political bondage, from which it was just recovering; and that dared to tell 25 millions of men—*ye shall not be free!*

In the windows of six or seven houses, a number of transparencies presented themselves: a few of the mottos are subjoined, as trifling circumstances sometimes mark the disposition of the times.

Perfect union and equal liberty to the men of Ireland.—  
Vive la Republique: Vive la Nation.—Church and state di-

forced.—Liberty triumphant.—The rights of men established.—Despotism prostrate.—The tyrants are fled; let the people rejoice.—Heaven beheld their glorious efforts, and crowned their deeds with success.—France is free; so may we; let us will it.—Awake, O ye that sleep.—A gallows suspending an inverted crown, with these words: “May the fate of every tyrant be that of Capet.”—A check to Despots.—The cause of mankind triumphant.—Irishmen rejoice.—Union among Irishmen.—Rights of man.—Irishmen! look at France.—Liberty and equality.

#### IRELAND.

8th Sept. 1783 —Armed citizens spoke.

2d Dec. 1783.—Their delegates ran away.

30th Oct. 1792.—We are taxed, tythed, and enslaved, but we have only to unite and be free.

#### FRANCE.

14th July, 1789.—Sacred to Liberty.

10th Aug. 1792.—The people triumphant.

22d Oct. 1792.—Exit of tyranny.

The night closed in the most orderly manner, without either bonfire or any kind of irregularity whatever.

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#### NORTHERN WHIG CLUB.

AT a general meeting on the 5th of November, held pursuant to notice, the following resolutions were agreed to:

*ARCH. H. ROWAN, ESQ. IN THE CHAIR:*

Resolved, That it is with the greatest satisfaction we embrace this opportunity to congratulate our country on the late ignominious flight of the enemies to liberty, from the territory of the French Republic; and to express our hopes, that the present disturbances in that country may speedily terminate in the stable tranquillity of a good government, founded on the principles of equal liberty, and the unalienable rights of man.—Unanimously.



Resolved, That as an early acquiescence in the just demands of the people is the surest pledge of peace and tranquillity in any country, we trust we shall speedily see the wishes of this nation complied with, by an honest and effectual reform in the representation of the people, on a broad principle of equal justice and equal liberty to all sects and denominations of Irishmen; satisfied as we are that a sincere union among ourselves, and a total oblivion of past dissensions, from whatever cause arising, can alone secure to this country, freedom, happiness and prosperity.—One dissident.

Resolved, That we see with the greatest satisfaction the rapid decay of prejudice and bigotry in the part of the country most immediately within our observation; and we anticipate with pleasure the day of their total downfall.—Unanimously.

WM. SINCLAIRE, sec.

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BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY, (BLUE.)

AT a meeting of the Belfast Volunteer Company, blue, at the Exchange, November 24, 1792,

*ROBERT GETTY, ESQ. IN THE CHAIR:*

THE packets having this day brought the glorious intelligence, of the French having obtained the possession of Brussels, the capital of the Austrian Netherlands, and thereby having virtually completed the liberation of the Belgic people—

The company unanimously agreed to publish the following declaration of their sentiments upon that great event—

Again has Liberty triumphed; again have her sons conquered; and again we rejoice. We rejoice that another great country is free; and that in Belgia we are now able to recognize a nation of freemen.

We congratulate our countrymen on the good news; and we hail it as a certain pledge and forerunner of that reform in parliament, which will procure to the people their due weight

in the legislature of this country. Already corruption trembles; and, ere long, at the UNITED VOICE OF THE PEOPLE, she must depart the land. Now is the time for Irishmen to banish prejudice, and to embrace each other as brethren, the children of the same God. Forgetting past errors, let them strive in future, to promote the happiness of every religious sect and denomination; and their country must be free and flourishing.

JAS. McCLEAN, SEC.

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REPLY TO THE SHEFFIELD AND BELFAST ADDRESSES.

Answer of the President of the French Assembly, (Citizen Gregoire) to the Addresses of the Societies of Sheffield in England, and Belfast in Ireland.

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD,

YOUR addresses to the representatives of the French nation, have filled them with pleasing emotions. In imposing on me the honorable duty of a reply, they make me regret that I can but imperfectly express, what all with so much energy feel. To have the honour to be an English or a Frenchman, carries with it a title to every degree of mutual affection that can subsist among men.

The curious in your country are pleased to traverse the globe in order to explore nature; henceforth they can visit Montblanc (Savoy) without quitting France; in other words without leaving their friends. The day on which free Savoy unites itself with us, and that on which children of high minded England appear among us, are, in the eye of reason, days of triumph. Nothing is wanting in these affecting scenes, but the presence of all Great Britain, to bear testimony to the enthusiasm with which we are inspired by the name of liberty and that of the people with whom we are about to form eternal alliance.

The National Convention has wished to testify its satisfac-

tion to the English, in decreeing that they would conduct in the presence of some of them the trial of the last of their Kings. Sixty ages have elapsed since Kings first made war on liberty : the most miserable pretexts have been sufficient for them to spread trouble over the earth. Let us recollect with horror that under the reign of Ann, the falling of a pair of gloves, and that under Louis XIV. a window opening from one apartment into another, were sufficient causes for deluging Europe in blood.

Alas ! short is the duration prescribed by Eternal Power to our weak existence ; and shall then the ferocious ambition of some individuals embitter or abridge our days, with impunity ? Yet a little moment, and despots and their cannons shall be silenced ; philosophy denounces them at the bar of the universe ; and history, sullied with their crimes, has drawn their characters. Shortly the annals of mankind will be those of virtue ; and in the records of France, a place will be reserved for our testimonies of fraternity with the British and Irish Societies ; but especially for the Constitutional Society of London.

Doubtless the new year, which is now approaching, will see all your rights restored. The meeting of your parliament attracts our attention. We hope that then, philosophy will thunder by the mouth of eloquence, and that the English will substitute the great charter of Nature, in place of the great charter of King John.

The principles upon which our own republic has been founded, have been discovered by the celebrated writers of your nation ; we have taken possession of their discoveries in the social art, because, truths revealed to the world are the property of all mankind. A people which has brought reason to maturity, will not be content with liberty by halves ; it will doubtless refuse to capitulate with despotism.

Generous Britons ! let us associate for the happiness of the human race ; let us destroy every prejudice ; let us cause use-



ful knowledge to filter through every branch of the social tree ; let us inspire our equals with a sense of their dignity ; let us teach them above all, that vices are the inseparable companions of slavery ; and let us depend upon it, that our efforts will be favored by the God of liberty, who weighs the destiny of empires, and holds in his hands the fate of nations.

*See Belfast Address. page 342.*

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#### BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY.

At a meeting of the Belfast Volunteer Company, Blue, 14th December, 1792, to take into consideration a late Proclamation, issued by the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council of Ireland ;

*MR. JAMES MUNFOAD IN THE CHAIR :*

Resolved, That a Committee of five be appointed, for the purpose of taking into their consideration the said Proclamation—and do report the same to this Company on Monday next.

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At a meeting of the Belfast Volunteer Company, Monday, 17th December, 1792 ;

*ROBERT GETTY, ESQ. IN THE CHAIR :*

The following Address was unanimously agreed to :

TO THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

WE are induced to address you on the present occasion, with an exposition of our sentiments, in consequence of the late Proclamation, issued by the Lord Lieutenant and Council of this kingdom, against the assembling of certain new volunteer associations in the county and city of Dublin—and we shall be very happy indeed, if our sentiments shall meet your approbation—which will be best known by the resolutions which the said proclamation is likely to draw from other associated corps, like ourselves.

Whether the peace of the country is intended by this proclamation, we shall not pretend to say—we are however more confident in believing that its aim is to divide; and the forced compliment paid to more ancient associations, in contradistinction to those now forming, against which this proclamation is levelled, leaves us on this head little room to doubt.

We do not suppose it possible, however, that this effect will be produced; our country has been too long divided by trifles, and is now too sensible of the rising consequence of its people, by the unity which pervades all ranks, to fear such an event.—We all look forward to the same common object of political liberty, and we know too well by sad experience, that it is not by divisions we are to accomplish our purpose.

Philanthropy, the offspring of charity and benevolence, is shedding over us its influence like the best of blessings, and mankind becoming wise are determined to be free.

We originally took up arms for our defence against foreign invasion, and we have continued in the use of them, because we consider it a means of producing internal tranquillity.

We have always when called on, given our assistance to the magistracy of our country, in the due execution of the laws. In a word, we esteem it proper that citizens should know the use of arms, and we consider that country in the best state of defence, when the people are strong. The same force which was ready to defend the country against the attempts of foreign force, we hope, will be ever found equally ready to assert domestic quiet; the preservation of private property; and the common rights of all the people of Ireland.

We consider for ourselves, that it is the unalienable right of all the people of Ireland to carry arms, and in confirmation of the said opinion, this Company always has been open to the admission of men of every religion;—and the experience of many years proves to our knowledge, that a man's sentiments

in this respect is no test of his ability, because we have found the same address, and the same good behavior in our brother soldiers, professing to be Roman Catholics, as in those of any other religion.

Impressed with these sentiments, and highly sensible of the great and useful consequences which may result from the people embodying themselves for the purpose of learning the use of arms!—we hail as brothers our fellow-citizens, entering into associations like our own, for the welfare, prosperity, and emancipation of their country; under whatever name or of whatever religion; and we will cultivate with them one common interest. We declare for ourselves, that the freedom of our country is our only object; and if we are asked, what are our views and our wishes, without hesitation, we answer, we want the renovation of the constitution; and to those people who are pleased to call all public virtue treason, and all improvement innovation—we reply, that an effectual and adequate reform in the representation of the people in parliament is our only object, in the pursuit of which object we shall never slacken our efforts.

If bad advisers, or weak and wicked men, shall force the people into extremity—on them let all the miseries fall of civil convulsion.

The people demand that share of the Constitution which its spirit warrants, and in the pursuit they are justified.—We are now united—let us persevere—and success will crown our endeavors.

JAMES McCLEAN, SEC.



AT A MEETING OF THE  
FIRST BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY,

DECEMBER 18, 1792,

*WILLIAM TENNENT IN THE CHAIR.*

THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS WAS UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO:

TO THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND,

FELLOW-SOLDIERS,

*YOUR COUNTRY IS IN DANGER!*

THE period of a few fleeting months has scarcely elapsed, since the First Belfast Volunteer Company, impressed with the interesting situation of this island, and the extraordinary increase of its armed citizens, did publish to the world, anew, their sentiments concerning the volunteer institution—a dignified and most honorable institution, in whose lists should be found enrolled the names of ALL the virtuous inhabitants of Ireland. We, who in the hour of danger, and in the face of the enemy, took up arms in defence of our country, when left to its own energy, by an abandoned and imbecile administration; We, who have received the unanimous thanks of every branch of the legislature, did not imagine, that the arm of power would ever be uplifted in this land, to suppress the revival of our laudable associations.

When the right of the people to appear in arms is called in question, by a proclamation of the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council of Ireland; when the exercise of this right is branded with the epithets, illegal and seditious—when menacing preparations by land and sea, indicate the near approach of war; and when false and malicious reports are industriously circulated, with a view of spreading jealousies and discontents; we call upon you to be firm!—to persevere!—to unite!

The union of the people now makes despots tremble in foreign lands. It is to union Ireland must owe its salvation: the want of union, ten years since, rendered abortive all your efforts for emancipation.

Our fellow-soldiers of Dublin, are charged with assembling "to withstand lawful authority, and violently and forcibly to redress pretended grievances." What! are the grievances of which the people complain, only "pretended ones?" Is seeking a restoration of our rights—a reform in the representation of the people in parliament, an attempt to subvert the constitution? We say, no! it is to restore it.

Under these circumstances, we esteem it our duty to make a further declaration of our principles and opinions.

We associated for the defence of ourselves, this town and country, and for the support of the rights of Ireland. We say, that it is the right of the people to be represented in parliament—taxation without representation is oppression—that the people are not represented—that parliament is not as it ought to be, an emanation from the people—that the grievances under which the people labor are almost innumerable and intolerable. But we add, that a real and radical reform in the representative branch of the legislature, would restore the people to their due weight in the government of the country, and every lesser evil would quickly vanish.

These are our opinions.—Neither proclamations nor threats shall deter us from the pursuit of our rights. Our desire is peace;—the welfare of our country, of our families, of our friends, requires it of us. Let those who, by resisting the united voice of a nation, drive the people into extremities, be alone answerable to God and their country for the consequences.

Fellow-soldiers!—Unite!—increase your numbers and improve your discipline!—a people aspiring to be free, should be able to protect liberty. An armed nation can never be made slaves.—Persevere! and our country must be saved!

WILLIAM TENNENT, CHAIRMAN.

JOHN RABB, SECRETARY.

## TOWN MEETING.

We, the subscribers, inhabitants of the town of Belfast, earnestly request the attendance of our fellow-citizens, at a general meeting of the town, at the market-house, on Wednesday next, the 26th inst. at noon, for the purpose of expressing our sentiments on the present state of public affairs; and to enter into such other measures as may be deemed expedient for the accomplishing that great object—an equal representation of the people in parliament.

*Belfast, December 19, 1792.*

|                  |                 |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| C. Ranken,       | Robert Davis,   | Wm. Magee,      |
| Wm. Brown,       | Robert Thomson, | John Cuming,    |
| Cunn. Greg,      | Will. Sinclair, | Wm. Tennent,    |
| Alex. Orr,       | Robert Getty,   | Thomas Brown,   |
| Will. Stevenson, | Alex. Mitchell, | John Boyle,     |
| Jas. Ferguson,   | John Holmes,    | Thos. Sinclair, |
| John Macartney,  | John Brown,     | Sam. M'Tier,    |
| Sam. Thompson,   | Alex. Gordon,   | Henry Haslett.  |
| James Holmes,    | John Robinson,  |                 |

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 COPY OF AN ADDRESS

To the Delegates for Parliamentary Reform, in Scotland, unanimously agreed to by the Second Society of United Irishmen, of Belfast; and recommended to the other societies of this town, to be sent as the joint address of four societies, which was accordingly done, December, 1792.

ASSOCIATED for the purpose of promoting union among Irishmen, restoring three millions of brethren to the rights of citizenship, and effectuating a radical and complete reform of parliamentary representation for the people of Ireland, we cannot behold, with indifference, the vivid glow of patriotism which brightens the face of other nations, and the irresistible elasticity, with which man, long bent down into a beast of burden, shakes off the yoke of despotism and resumes his form erect, in neighbouring kingdoms. We exult in the



triumph of humanity which regenerated Gaul exhibits ; and the revival of the long-dormant valor, which made the Cæsars tremble, and in earlier times, filled Rome itself with suppliant mourners. We accompany with raptures, the steps of free-men traversing the mountains of Savoy, erecting the standard of liberty on the strong holds of despotism, and uniting the great family of God in the bonds of fraternity. In the fruitful plains of Belgia, we hail prospects equally grateful to the enlightened eye, and flattering to the liberal heart. The arm of despotism palsied—her hosts discomfited—her throne tottering to ruin—and her motley train of slaves and sycophants, with all her proud abettors, plunged in despair, or meditating with fell revenge a last convulsive struggle in her cause.

But our raptures and our triumphs might be ranked with the transports of children, did we dwell for ever, as with the stare of foolish wonder, on these the glories of another land ; while even the fainter brightness which opens on our own, and sister kingdoms, shines unnoticed. Thank God ! there too we see the light of political knowledge widely diffused ; and the seeds of liberality vegetating with vigor in the genial warmth of restored fraternity, and united patriotism. With us, that knowledge hath already assumed the form of language, and, in humble respectful petition, presented the claims of a proscribed nation at the bar of the legislature. We are sorry to say these claims were not treated with deference, or decency. We were not discouraged, but reanimated by their rejection. The chaos of Irishmen, as by the voice of Omnipotence, was instantly moulded into a body, its members arranged, and the frame organized. Nor were vigor and harmony ever characterized in greater perfection, than in the representation of that body now exhibited in the metropolis of the kingdom. And as it reflects the image of the original, we know it will speak its voice—the people's voice !—the only “*jure divino*” law of nations !

We know, too, that voice *shall* be heard. Irishmen have willed it, and they *must* be free. The violations of their constitution, the perversion of its principles, the abuse of its powers, and the avowed influence of venality and corruption, must be swept away together; not, we hope, by the awful experiment of a contested Revolution—may heaven avert the dreadful necessity! but, by a voluntary, immediate, and radical reform.

While this is the object of our desires, our actions, and our union, and we are unalterably determined, by peaceable and constitutional means, to obtain it, we reprobate the mean idea of enjoying it exclusively. Liberty is the desire of all nations! the birthright of all men! To preserve it with watchful jealousy, is the first political duty! To recover it, when arrested by the hand of tyranny, the highest pinnacle of human glory. That all men may assert, reclaim, and enjoy it, is, therefore, the fervent prayer of our hearts!

That Scotland, for ages the asylum of independence, and equally renowned in arms, and arts; that Scotland, the modern nurse of literature and science, whose seminaries have supplied the world with statesmen, orators, historians, and philosophers; Scotland, whose penetrating genius has forced its way into the repositories of nature, unveiled her hidden mysteries, and brought forward all her richest treasures for the healing of the nations! Scotland, where a Reid and a Beatty broke the spells of an annihilating philosophy, which had reduced the universe to a shadowy idea; who held her up to ridicule; and presented creation anew, in her native substantiality and solid glories, to the sight of all men! That this same Scotland should have so long forgotten her degraded state as a nation, slept over her political insignificance, or silently acquiesced in the mockery of a popular representation, among the senators of another people, hath long filled us with inexpressible astonishment. And, when we reflected on

our relation of fellow-subjects, or, as our Catholic brethren have more properly denominated us, fellow-slaves! and the more solemn ties of religion and blood by which many of us are connected with you, we candidly own our astonishment was not free from a mixture of regret; for, however humiliating our own situation may have been, the Protestants and reformed among us, in the scale of freedom, were much superior to the Scottish people.

What your state, as a people, was, previous to the day which set upon your independence, and blotted your name from among the nations of the earth, we presume not to delineate. What your state from that day has been, and now is, we know, and ye, the delegates for promoting a reform, must feel. Delineation of it is therefore unnecessary. We only say, and we say it with confidence, Scotland as a nation, or part of a nation, has no people! The idea, therefore, of a parliamentary representation of the Commons of Scotland is only a political fiction! a fiction so bold that we are astonished at the audacity, which first presumed to hold it out as a reality. And when we consider that a whole nation implicitly swallowed the idea as a reality, we cannot be surprised that the genius of a Hume should invert the position, and endeavour to impose the reality of the universe, upon a credulous sceptical world, as an idea only.

Your eyes, brother-friends of a reform, are now opened to the deception; your tongues are loosed, and your pens ready. While, with your eyes ye behold the necessity and importance of the political regeneration which you have united to promote, let your tongues make it familiar to the ears, and your pens present it to the eyes of your brethren, whose fathers were a people. We are assured of your abilities, your learning, and your eloquence; your patriotism we doubt not; and on your perseverance we rely with confidence. Nor can we suppose for a moment, that ye will ever suffer the whisper of



malice, or the frowns of office to deter you from your pursuit. It is worthy of men—worthy of you—and ye will not abandon it! Ye will never disappoint your brethren by disgracing yourselves! We know the conflict is arduous. But, where the public good is the end, and the means are legal, every step is safe,—success sure, though slow, and the reward immortal.

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#### TOWN MEETING.

AT a general meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, convened by public advertisement, at the Town House, and for want of room, adjourned to Mr. Vance's Meeting-House, on Wednesday, December 26, 1792,

#### *CHARLES RANKEN, IN THE CHAIR.*

At a period when the public mind is so much agitated—when the nation seems to be in a state of smothered war;—we deem it the duty of every man who is a friend to his country, to peace and good order, to come forward and publicly avow his sentiments.

We, therefore, declare, that after all we have heard and read about our glorious and happy constitution, we are so ignorant as not to be able to find what it is: We cannot, however, conceive, that if in any nation three-fourths of the inhabitants are absolutely excluded from all share in the legislature, and only a very small part of the other fourth represented; if the great majority, of what are called the representatives, be appointed arbitrarily, by a few individuals, for a long term of years, and not accountable to the people;—If places and pensions be multiplied for the purposes of corruption; if no responsibility be annexed to the great offices of state; if taxes without end be levied off the people, and the nation involved in debt, for the purpose of purchasing votes to impose more taxes; if the honors of the peerage be brought to sale to raise funds for the same purposes; if the surplus of the revenue, instead of being applied to lessen the national debt,

be carried to another country, whether to bribe the representatives of the people there, or to pay German *butchers* for massacring the friends of freedom in France ; if the subject be deprived of the trial by jury, whether by penal statutes, by revenue or game laws, by fiats or by attachments :—We say— if any nation labors under those and innumerable other grievances, practised under color of law—we are yet to learn what is the glorious and happy constitution of that nation : We do not hesitate to say—THEY ARE A NATION OF SLAVES !

We declare, that a government by King, Lords and Commons, the Commons being a real representation of all the people, is the government which, if attainable without violence, we wish for and prefer ; that we do not wish for a revolution, deeming it the last measure of dire necessity—a measure to which no good or wise man would resort until every other means had been tried in vain—and being convinced that our present form of government, however defective, possesses the power, if it had the will, of reforming all abuses and remedying all defects without violence or commotion, and that such reform must take place whenever the united voice of the people shall call for it.

And we further declare our opinion, that if any persons in this kingdom be endeavoring to promote a revolution, it can only be those, who determined, to preserve till the last moment their system of corruption, their borough influence, their places and their pensions, pertinaciously oppose every attempt towards a reform, thereby doing their utmost to produce public commotion and overthrow the government, by driving the nation to despair.—Infatuated mortals!—wilfully and wickedly blind to future consequences!—and of whom it may be justly said, “ *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.*” Whom God determines to destroy, he first makes mad.

We declare, that a radical reform in the representation of the people has long been, and still is, the great object to which

all our wishes, all our endeavors tend, the object which we have pursued, and which we shall never cease to pursue until it is attained ; that to attain it we shall think no sacrifice too much, no risk too great ; and that no reform can ever be adequate or useful, satisfactory or just, unless all Irishmen, of every description, shall be equally and fairly represented.

Resolved, That, with the utmost deference for our countrymen in general, we would most respectfully suggest the propriety of county meetings and of provincial conventions, by delegations from parishes, cities and great towns :—a measure by which the united voice of all the men of Ireland would be drawn to a focus, all wild ideas exploded, a permanent chain of national communication formed, and the important business of the kingdom conducted with that dignity and energy which become a great nation, peaceably, but firmly demanding their rights.

Resolved, That a committee of twenty-one be now appointed, with full powers to correspond, in our name, with our fellow-citizens in all parts of this country, in all parts of this province ; and in all parts of the other provinces ; and in concert with them to pursue such measures as shall be deemed expedient for procuring such meetings and conventions :—That said committee have full power, (when they shall deem the time proper) to call, in our name, a general meeting of the inhabitants of this parish, to appoint delegates to such meeting and convention, and also to call us together for the same purpose.

Resolved, that

|                 |                   |                |
|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| C. Ranken,      | Samuel Neilson,   | Wm. Tennent,   |
| Robert Thomson, | Rev. S. Kelburne, | Robert Simms,  |
| John Holmes,    | Rev. P. Vance,    | Dr. M'Donnell, |
| James Holmes,   | Hu. Montgomery,   | George Joy,    |
| Doctor White,   | Henry Haslett,    | Hu. Crawford,  |
| Jas. Ferguson,  | Robert Getty,     | Sam. Brown,    |
| Will. Sinclair, | Sam. M'Tier,      | John Boyle,    |



be, and they hereby are, appointed a committee, for the above purposes.

Resolved, That our warmest thanks are justly due to the volunteers of Ireland—to the old associations and to the new corps formed and forming:—soldiers of liberty!—we thank you!—be firm!—increase your numbers—perfect your discipline—despise the fulminations of placed and pensioned courtiers, and of guzzling corporations. Great is your merit! you preserved internal peace—you aided and supported the civil Magistrate in the execution of the laws—unite and persevere! You saved your country from foreign invasion, and rescued her from foreign legislation—and should a contest for liberty ever become necessary, (which God avert) we trust you will rescue her from internal oppression.

Resolved, That a voluntary contribution be received from the inhabitants of this town, who, from age, infirmity, or other causes, are prevented from enrolling themselves among the volunteers, for the purpose of creating a military fund, to supply with ammunition and other necessaries, the volunteers already embodied and embodying in Belfast—and that the committee this day appointed, be requested to take the trouble of receiving the same.

And with great deference to our countrymen, we beg leave to recommend the adoption of a similar measure.

CHARLES RANKEN, CHAIRMAN.

Mr. Ranken having left the chair, Mr. William Sinclair was unanimously called to it; and it was then Resolved, that the unanimous thanks of this meeting be given to the chairman for his readiness in taking the chair, and for the strict propriety of his conduct in it.

WILLIAM SINCLAIRE,  
SAM. NEILSON, SEC.

THE following is an account of the meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, on the subject of a Reform in Parliament, at which the foregoing resolutions were agreed to.

DEBATE.

THE meeting was one of the most numerous of the inhabitants of this town that we ever recollect. Charles Ranken, Esq. of Richmond Lodge, being called to the chair; the business was opened by Mr. Robert Thomson.

He observed, that we were called together to express our sentiments on the state of public affairs at this crisis—a crisis the most important and awful that had occurred in this country since the Revolution of 1688. Discontent pervaded the kingdom; the people felt grievances and wished them redressed; but many wild notions had been taken up about the mode of redress; that many talked of a revolution; many talked of liberty and equality, words little understood by some, and to which strange ideas were annexed; that if we could this day lay a foundation for pointing the attention of the public mind to a proper object and to that alone, the town of Belfast would do more service to the country, and acquire more honor to itself than it ever had done, or ever might do again; that we had no occasion for a revolution; all grievances would be redressed by a parliamentary reform, and that might be obtained without violence, without anarchy.

To follow him through an excellent train of argument, which carried conviction to the understanding of every hearer, as much exceeds our ability as it would be inconsistent with the limits of this book. With much force of thought, he pointed out the necessity that at present exists of declaring, what were the objects of the people. That the agitation of the public rendered it absolutely necessary, and for that purpose, as a part of the collective body, we were that day assembled. He drew a striking picture of the extreme difference between the former state of France, under its old government, when

the will of one man gave law to millions, and the state of this country. We have not, said he, here, like them, to tear up by the roots and overturn government—we have not to subvert, but to reform. We had, he said, grievances, and enormous ones, that demanded immediate redress. He dwelt particularly on the words liberty and equality, as terms often misunderstood; and went at large into the first principles of government, pointing out the alterations that take place in the change from the state of nature to that of civil society. Among the many wild notions that have been spoken of, nothing was more wild than those which arose from the improper use of the two words mentioned—words which by no means bore the meanings often affixed to them. He defined liberty as that state which afforded protection to all alike by equal laws, for the government and good of the whole community. With regard to equality, taken in its literal meaning, it was absurd, for it did not exist in nature. He threw the folly of an equalizing system into the following point of view:—he computed the acres in Ireland at 11,000,000, near three of which were generally deemed either bog or mountain, useless for the purposes of husbandry; and the inhabitants of the kingdom at 4,000,000. Suppose the other 8,000,000, divided, there are only 2 acres for each inhabitant! The coin of Ireland was a good many years since estimated at about three millions; suppose it now to be five, if equally divided it would give 25s. to each;—but that is impossible, for the moment insurrections began, every man who had money would either send it out of the kingdom or bury it in the earth, where probably much of it would never be found. As to all the other wealth of the nation, it would be in a great measure lost; for no man would have use for it, no man could buy it. Could a man with two acres of land, and 25s. in money, buy a coach and six, or a fine house and its furniture? Could he carry on manufactures with that capital; or could he buy ships and export your pro-



duce and manufactures to foreign markets? Would any man by such a partition acquire any thing worth contending for, or for which he would wish to throw his country into confusion, and deluge it with blood? Surely no. But let us look a little farther—the spendthrift, the drunkard, the gambler, would not have their bad habits eradicated by two acres of land and 25s. in money; they would quickly be gone; the careful, sober, parsimonious class of men would acquire them; here again is inequality, and a new partition must be made by a new commotion, and more bloodshed, to restore equality again; and this without end. Who would not fly to the verge of the earth to avoid a country where such confusion reigned?

In the interval of contention, trade and manufactures, the soul of industry and the spring of wealth, would be lost; for the means of carrying them on would no more exist. From the instant of the establishment of a state of equality, (were it a possible case) from what we are, we should infallibly fall into a state of beggary, and become a nation of savages. He declared, that he preferred our government to every other, with an improved representation; but without it, any other was perhaps as good. Impressed with such ideas, he had drawn up a Declaration, which he would submit to the assembly, and which he hoped would produce an unanimous vote; he accordingly read the whole, and afterwards moved it paragraph by paragraph, seconded by Mr. Wm. Sinclair.

It was moved by Mr. John Holmes, on coming to the third resolution, that the words “if attainable without violence,” should be expunged, which led to some debate, but was at length negatived, with three or four voices for expunging.

Mr. Robert Getty said, that a Reform in Parliament was the utmost bound of his wishes, and if attained, he should as one rest contented. He confessed that the British Constitution, in its theory, was peculiarly adapted to the people, and perhaps better fitted for their present condition than a purer

one. He went into the first principles of government, proving that it was an institution intended to promote the good of society. That society had a right to model or reform it as they pleased, and found most conducive to their interest. He stated a case, that if a people fairly appointed a convention for examining abuses crept into their government, and that the plan for its reformation had afterwards met the perfect sanction of those who appointed them to prepare it—in such a situation, a government that would pretend to oppose the general will, would be guilty of high treason against the state. If ever such a day should arrive, he would say as one that he should be found at his post, ready to do his duty to his country. He urged with much ability the wisdom of rallying round one point—round the constitution—as nothing could prevent the completion of our wish except a divided sentiment among ourselves. Let moderate men come forward—the public interest requires it: let us save the country from the miseries of convulsion by a reform. Let governors beware how by folly they commit this country; for if it ever happened, it would perhaps be found that the beautiful frame of our government might be lost, and that neither the existence of a prince, nor of sapient hereditary counsellors, would be thought essential to the vital principles of freedom.

Mr. Monfoad said, there are four classes of people in this assembly to whom I wish to address myself; the first are those who by reason of their advanced age, or want of health, are unable to serve their country in person; they may do it much service by contributing to the cause in a pecuniary way. Unless you appear to be in earnest, and able to carry into execution what may be agreed on at your convention, you will be spurned at by those who at present enjoy the power of ruling in this country. I therefore earnestly recommend, to such as cannot personally assist in this business, by reason of years and infirmities, and are rich, that a subscription be immedi-

ately opened to purchase arms, ammunition, and accoutrements. The second class of people, are those who once took up and carried arms in the cause of their country, but who have long laid them aside. Different causes may have operated upon the minds of different men to induce them to do so ; many years have they stood idle, and left the task to others, who have labored incessantly to emancipate their country. To those who were enrolled among their armed brethren, I recommend their immediately resuming their arms, and helping to liberate their country. The third class are those who are young enough, who enjoy good health, and who are rich enough to enable them to be volunteers, but nevertheless, have not yet joined their brethren in arms, to those I recommend their losing no time—the cause requires the exertions of all ; these have as much at stake as others, I therefore entreat them to come forward and enrol themselves among their armed brethren.

The fourth and last class are very different from those I have mentioned, these are the lower order of the people, but who are the strength of the nation ; by whose labor the whole are supported ; these have their country's welfare as much at heart as the others, because on them falls the weight of many useless and burthensome taxes, which are again lavished away upon placemen and pensioners. This description of the people are willing to help to free their country, but are not able. Their assistance is absolutely necessary, for the cause requires the union and force of the whole people. By reason of their poverty they are not able to arm or clothe themselves, nor to lose the necessary time requisite to obtain a proper degree of discipline. To enable them to do so should be applied a part of the subscriptions raised by the rich ; help them also with your advice ; they require the advice and instruction of those whose station and situation of life have been such as to enable them to acquire knowledge, experience and wisdom. Avoid



being led with rashness into premature measures ; be firm, but be not rash ; for on the determined cool firmness of the whole people, does the success of your measures depend. The time is now arrived which requires the exertions of every individual of the community, in the several stations and situations in which they are able to act. You who are rich and not able to serve in person, contribute, and contribute liberally to the cause, by enabling your poorer brethren to act. Ye who are poor, come forward, and you may and will be enabled to do much good, by the contributions of the rich being applied to assist you. And to you who are rich enough to arm and clothe yourselves, and whose age and health are such as make you eligible soldiers in the cause of your country ; I hope you will all come forward at this crisis. Perhaps such another coincidence of circumstances may never come again. The cause in view is a glorious cause, the salvation of your country ; be united, be firm, and in the end you must be successful.

Counsellor Sampson supported the amendment, on the ground that it rendered the resolution more explicit.

Rev. Mr. Kelburn opposed the amendment, because he was convinced it could answer no valuable end. He said that as an individual he did not prefer the much boasted constitution ; he did not know whether there was really any such thing : he had heard of a government by King, Lords and Commons, but could never approve of hereditary legislators, because wisdom is not hereditary ; and he asked if security could be given for their inheriting hereditary wisdom, as well as hereditary titles---and granting that this could be done, and that lords always inherit the wisdom of their progenitors, yet he could not see any right to hereditary legislation ; for it was supposed to be a fundamental principle of the British Constitution, as it is called, that the people cannot be taxed without being represented, and that it was as bad to be subject to other laws, laws affecting life without being represented, as laws af-

fecting property, for life is more valuable than property—all that a man hath will he give for his life.

Besides, Crown and Lords are two to one against the people in this supposed Constitution, the Lords are created and creatable at pleasure by the Crown, and the Commons have been found at times very complaisant, so far so, as to give up the rights of the people for something to patch their old coats. The mover of the amendment had said, that it would be time enough to use the words proposed to be expunged, when a reform should be denied; but as no security could be given that a reform would not be denied, it was but fair to speak our minds out at once; we spoke but hypothetically, and only said that we would prefer a government by King, Lords and Commons, were that Commons to be the true and real representatives of the people, rather than have recourse to violence, though we might esteem another form of government more perfect.

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AT a meeting of the Belfast Volunteer Battalion, blue,  
29th December, 1792,

*ROBT. GETTY, IN THE CHAIR.*

The following address to the society of United Irishmen in Dublin, was unanimously agreed to:

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

Accept of our sincere thanks for your animating address to the Volunteers of Ireland;—as a part of that body, permit us to assure you, that we are ready to protect our 'Country in that guarded quiet, which may secure it from external hostility, and to maintain that internal regimen throughout the land, which superseding a notorious police, or a suspected militia, may preserve the blessings of peace by a vigilant preparation for war.'

Your country is much indebted to you, for your zealous efforts to revive that latent spirit which has so long slumbered

in the breasts of Irishmen ; on the efforts of the people, the freedom of Ireland depends.

Go on! generous countrymen—continue your efforts for the good of the whole community. Though envy may detract, though corruption may calumniate, and though the hand of power may be raised against you, yet success will crown your labors, for the people are with you, and will second your patriotic exertions.

R. GETTY, CHAIRMAN.

JAS. M'CLEAN, SEC.

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AT a meeting of the Committee appointed by a late meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, at the Donegall-Arms, on Monday the 31st of December, 1792,

*J. HOLMES, IN THE-CHAIR:*

Resolved, That this committee do recommend it to the several parishes, granges, and great towns in the county, to meet and elect each two persons, to represent them at a county meeting, to be held on the 14th day of January next, at Ballymena ; for the purpose of promoting that great measure, an equal representation of all the people in parliament, and to determine on the propriety of calling a provincial meeting, to forward the same purpose.

Resolved, That in consequence of the powers vested in us, we do hereby request a meeting of the inhabitants of the parish of Shankill, at the parish church, on Saturday next, the fifth of January, to elect two delegates to attend the meeting of this county, proposed to be held on the 14th January, at Ballymena :—And also, a meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, at the town house, on Tuesday, the 8th January.

Resolved, That the mode of election on this occasion, be recommended to be by ballot ; and in order to expedite the business, it is requested that each person do come prepared with the names of two delegates, written on a piece of paper.



A committee will attend with boxes constructed for the purpose of taking the ballot, from eleven o'clock until two on each of the days.

Committee adjourned till to-morrow at 12 o'clock.

J. HOLMES, CHAIRMAN.

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BELFAST LIGHT DRAGOONS,

J. BURDEN, IN THE CHAIR:

AN authentic declaration of the public opinion being now necessary, both for the direction of the legislature and the people; and as the country is not yet, we trust, so far degraded, that its unanimous and persevering demands upon any point of government, can be finally unsuccessful:—We, the members of the Belfast Light Dragoons, have assembled, in order to declare our political sentiments, viz.

I. We deem that a government by a King, Lords, and Commons, the Commons being freely and frequently chosen by the people, is that best adapted to the genius of this country,

II. That the object of the people is not to introduce, but to abolish novelties, such as venal boroughs, octennial parliaments, and pensioned representatives;—what we reprobate is *new*, what we venerate is *ANCIENT*.

III. That we are determined to continue our exertions until we obtain an impartial representation of *ALL* the people—ignorant of any principle by which a religious denomination should be excluded; nor could it be the intention of our ancestors to abridge a man of civil freedom, because he exercised religious liberty.

IV. That the only trusty safeguard of a country is an armed and disciplined people—We will therefore continue embodied, and in the use of arms, until we shall obtain the objects of our wishes; and then we will continue in arms that we may defend them.

HU. McILWAIN, sec. B. L. D.

## BELFAST MEETING.

WE the subscribers, beg leave respectively to suggest to our townsmen, that we conceive it highly proper, at this time, for the inhabitants of Belfast to address our most gracious Sovereign, and humbly to offer their warmest thanks to his Majesty, for his paternal care of, and affection for, the people of Ireland, so strongly manifested by his Majesty's recommending to the serious consideration of his Irish Parliament, the situation of his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects of Ireland.

And we earnestly request a general and full meeting of the inhabitants on Saturday next, at the town-house, at twelve o'clock, to consider of this business.

*Belfast, 16th January, 1793.*

|                    |                   |                  |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Hu. Crawford,      | G. McIlveen, jun. | Hugh Montgomery, |
| John Cuming,       | Wm. Tennent,      | Robert Thomson,  |
| Will. Sinclair,    | Henry Joy,        | William Bruce,   |
| Sinclaire Kelburn, | Henry Haslett,    | John Holmes,     |
| James Holmes,      | Thos. Andrews,    | Geo. Wells,      |
| Jn. Haslett,       | Thomas Brown,     | Robt. Simms,     |
| E. McCormick,      |                   |                  |

The address to his Majesty from the inhabitants of Belfast, was confined solely to expressions of gratitude and thanks for his royal interference with parliament in behalf of the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

DECLARATION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE  
FRIENDS OF A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, IN BEL-  
FAST:

AT THEIR SECOND MEETING ON THURSDAY, 10th JANUARY, 1793,  
*WADDELL CUNNINGHAM IN THE CHAIR.*

SEVERAL years have elapsed since many of the wisest, and best men of England, Scotland, and Ireland, stimulated their countrymen to demand a Parliamentary Reform; under a conviction that it would conduce as much to the stability of govern-

ment, as to the liberty of the people. Had that demand been unreasonable, or that reform unnecessary, both would long since have been forgotten or remained neglected. But that demand has gained strength by age; and the people, instead of being lulled into indolence, are in danger of being roused into fury. Had the advice and entreaties of moderate men been attended to, the constitution and the administration of this country would now be secure; and continental revolutions would be contemplated by this free and peaceable island, as transactions in which we had no other share, than that which man should take in the sufferings or the welfare of man.

Those honest patriots who first excited the people and offered their best advice to government, are now called upon to remind and forewarn administration of the consequences of their former supineness, and their present obstinacy.— They have also exerted themselves in keeping alive some respect for the constitution, and some regard to peace, together with hope of redress. But if their exhortations to government be slighted, they feel that their influence with the people will be equally disregarded. They will then be reduced to a dilemma, which cannot long hold them in suspense. They must take part with government, or they must enlist under the banners of the public. They must either co-operate in establishing a tyranny in their country, or rush into the intemperate measures of an indignant multitude. They may be obliged to renounce an infatuated court, or to meet their dearest relations and friends in arms. Some may seek a remote retreat; and lament in silence the miseries and the crimes by which their native land shall be overwhelmed; but the more numerous and vigorous party will assuredly, after struggling in vain against the torrent, plunge into the flood of civil contest. They may endeavor to regulate its course and moderate its rage; but they will give it strength and perseverance.—



They will not be found among the least formidable enemies, or the least active patriots.

We wish not to insinuate, that there exists at present any party hostile to a peaceable settlement. If there be, we know it not. But this we know, that the public mind is in a ferment; that the public arm is strong; and that the most desperate proposals may speedily become the most grateful.

We therefore who have always fought for reform, within the limits of the constitution, and studied to combine liberty with peace, have determined not to slacken our exertions for the attainment of the one, and the preservation of the other. We have resolved that whatever may be the result of the present crisis, we shall be blameless; and that neither our rulers nor our fellow-subjects, shall have cause to accuse us either of intemperance or remissness. But we must at the same time solemnly declare that if the just demands of the people be despised, those who refuse and those who resist redress, will be answerable to posterity, to their country, and to God, for all the crimes and calamities that may follow.

In order to avert these evils as much as in us lies, by promoting the objects recited above, we have associated under the title of the Friends of a Parliamentary Reform; and have drawn up the following fundamental principles, in the hopes that all who approve of their spirit will follow our example, by forming societies of the same kind; so that the will of the public may be so explicitly declared on a few clear indisputable points, that opposition to such measures may find no pretext in any shades of difference among the people. Actuated by these motives we solicit a friendly communication and correspondence with every society in Ireland instituted with similar views: from a desire to receive or give information on the subject of an improvement in the representation of the Commons in their own House of Parliament; on a plan for its

reform ; and on the most effectual measures for carrying it into execution.

#### PRINCIPLES.

I. A Constitution composed of the King, Lords, and People, the latter fully and equally represented in a House of Commons, we prefer to every other, as admirably suited to the genius, wishes and interests of Ireland.

II. The present mode of representation is absurd, unequal, and inadequate ; contrary to the spirit of our own and of every free government.

III. We assert, that the basis of election should be extended to the people of every religious denomination.

With a constitution so modelled, as to restore the just rights of the collective body, without infringing on the prerogative of the Crown, or on the dignities of the peerage, we think this nation, whose loyalty has ever kept pace with their love of freedom, will be satisfied and rest content. To obtain it therefore, it is the duty of every individual in the most remote part of the realm to come forward, as the voice of the whole people cannot be raised without redress. It is the interest of all orders in the state, from the Sovereign through every gradation of the constituted powers, to submit to the demands of justice ; for that government is uncertain, fluctuating, and liable to eternal convulsions which is founded on principles opposed to the public will. A government to which the consent of the community is wanting verges on despotism, and will terminate in anarchy.

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AT the third meeting of the society, held January 19, 1793 ;—

#### NARCISSUS BATT IN THE CHAIR:

RESOLVED, That a correspondence be opened with the Friends of the Constitution, of Liberty and Peace in Dublin :

and that copies of these and future public transactions of this society be regularly transmitted to them.

Signed by order,

NARCISSUS BATT, CHAIRMAN.

### MILITARY RIOT IN BELFAST,

ON SATURDAY, 9th of MARCH, 1793.

THIS town, after having been for time immemorial on the best footing with his Majesty's forces quartered here, on Saturday night presented a scene subversive of the order, decency, and safety of the community.

About three quarters of an hour after six o'clock in the evening, a body of the 17th dragoons, intermixed with a few others of the military, rushed out from their quarters and drove furiously through most of the principal streets, with their sabres drawn, cutting at any one that came in their way, and attacking houses. This lasted near an hour, when, through the interference of magistrates, and some military officers, the party were dispersed. In the course of this business, the windows of a number of the inhabitants were broken; and some signs torn down. A great number of persons were slightly wounded, though none took any part in giving opposition to the affray. Charles Ranken, Esq. a justice of the peace for the county of Antrim, in endeavouring to take an artillery man, and after commanding his Majesty's peace by virtue of his office, was repeatedly stabbed at, and in a slight degree wounded. Mr. Campbell, surgeon, happening to be in a street through which the party were driving, one of them ran across it, and made several cuts at him, some of which penetrated through his clothes, and slightly wounded him. The windows of a milliner's shop were broken, in which cockades were hung up for sale. A man had his ear and his hand cut with a sword. Happily no lives were lost; and to the



prudence and quiet demeanor of the town's people it was owing.

The houses which suffered most were those of Mr. McCabe, watch-maker ; Mr. Orr, chandler ; Mr. Watson on the quay ; Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Sinclair, public-house keepers in North-street ; and the shop of Miss Wills, a milliner, in High-street. Their malice seemed principally leveled at the volunteers. Two of the dragoons received ample punishment from the swords of their officers. The consternation of the town may be easily supposed.

Two causes have been assigned for this unprovoked disturbance : viz. that there was a sign of Dumourier at a small public-house in North-street ; and that a blind fidler who plays through the streets at night, happened to be playing *Cu Ira*, a French air. With respect to the sign, it was erected before there was any prospect of a war with France ; and the circumstance of its being there could not be countenanced by the people, for few had ever heard of it till the riot brought it into notice. As to a tune played by a blind mendicant, it is too trifling a cause to be seriously mentioned, though he deposed on oath that he never knew the tune in question.

As soon as intelligence of the riot reached the officers of the troops, at the barrack-mess, they used much activity in suppressing it. Great praise is due to the exertions of the magistrates ; but the rapidity with which the party forced their way through the town, made it impracticable to suppress it till the injury was done. The gentleman who commands the regiment now in barracks, Captain McDonnell, signalized himself by the most active exertions ; and his regiment, the 55th, behaved extremely well. The circumstance of General Whyte's absence on other necessary duty, was much regretted ; but he returned to town instantly on hearing of the matter. A guard of 450 Volunteers sat up during the night, and no farther harm ensued.

On Sunday, the Sovereign, by request, called a meeting of the town at three o'clock, to consider of the best means of preserving the peace, and bringing the offenders to punishment. In the mean time Major General Whyte had arrived from Carrickfergus, and gave assurances of his earnest desire to co-operate with the civil power in bringing the offenders to punishment, and promoting the security and peace of the town. A committee was appointed by the town-meeting to inquire into the cause of the disturbances, and report to a future one, to be convened by them as soon as their report was ready. This committee consisted of 22, amongst whom were the Sovereign, High Constable, and all the magistrates resident in town. This committee, according to instruction, sat at a quarter past six on Sunday evening. General Whyte was invited to attend as a member, which he seemed rather to decline, but desired an interview with the committee, to whom he repeated his good wishes for the peace of the town, and expressed his wish and his reasons for desiring that the volunteers who were assembled, to the number of 450, would disperse; as he had ordered a patrol of officers, and a strong guard of the 55th regiment, who have always behaved with order and regularity; and at same time pledged himself to call upon the inhabitants and join them himself, if any necessity required it. A deputation was immediately sent from the committee to the volunteers, with a paper stating these facts, and requesting them to separate, which they instantly complied with.

The horsemen by whom principally this affair was conducted, were entire strangers, having only come in on the morning of the riot, though they seemed very well acquainted with the streets and houses before night-fall.

On Monday morning the committee sat by adjournment, at ten o'clock, and proceeded to examine witnesses upon oath respecting the rioters, for the purpose of bringing the aggress-

sors, whether soldiers or others, to justice ; but a fresh assault being made by a trooper, on a poor unoffending boy, with many expressions of menace which had been heard, shewed the necessity of removing them from a place which they had already so much insulted. Upon the committee representing this new fact to the General, he with a readiness that does him great honor, and deserves the warmest applause, ordered not only the four troops which came into town on Saturday, but also the remaining two of their regiment, which had marched 17 miles that morning, instantly to leave town. Two troops he had previously ordered to parade in the morning, that such persons as could identify any of the rioters, might have an opportunity of doing so, and three of them were accordingly turned over to the civil power ; but as the darkness of the hour, the similarity of their dress, and the rapidity with which they executed their purpose, made it difficult to bring conviction home to any who had been guilty of the most aggravated assaults, they were suffered to depart with their comrades.

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MONDAY, MARCH 11.—3 O'CLOCK.

THE Committee of the town of Belfast, appointed by the inhabitants at large, for the purpose of taking into consideration the riotous proceedings of several troopers and others, on Saturday night last :

Think it proper to declare, that there is a perfect co-operation between the very respectable character who commands his Majesty's forces in this part of the kingdom, Major General Whyte, and this committee—and that such steps have, with the General's concurrence, and with this committee's, been taken, as will, it is believed, completely preserve quiet and peace.

The public may rest assured that every measure will be adopted to bring the matter to a proper conclusion.



The general conduct of the 55th regiment has hitberto been such, as far as it falls within our knowledge—as to deserve the approbation of this town.

For self and rest of the Committee,

WILLIAM BRISTOW, SOVEREIGN,

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE.

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IT has been matter of surprize to every friend of Belfast, living at a distance from it, that its inhabitants submitted without a murmur, and without the slightest exculpation on their part, to the most erroneous and deceitful accounts of the riots between them and the military. To obviate that error, the following report is now first given in print. It was read in presence of the people, assembled for the purpose, and became a public property. It is brought forward in confutation of those who represented the conduct of the town as indefensible, because it did not defend itself; as well as for information to others, who respected the general conduct of the place, but were deprived of every argument in its favor, by its silent acquiescence.

This report was framed by the Committee, with an alteration made by Major General Whyte, then in Belfast, commanding his Majesty's forces in this part of the kingdom, and lately invested with the Commission of the Peace for the county of Antrim; who thus united the functions of a Civil Magistrate with the efficient powers of a military officer. Had it been adopted by the town at large, it was to have been published as the act of the inhabitants, with the concurrence of the General. The reader will in a moment perceive, by the manner in which the statement was drawn up, that no grounds whatever were laid to justify any attack. The privates of a military corps, just arrived in a town, the inhabitants of which they were necessarily unacquainted with, having only marched in that morning, avow an intention of committing an out-

rage; and put it in practice in the clouds of that very night, by attacking several houses, and wounding and maiming indiscriminately many inhabitants, peaceably walking about their business.—The report was rejected by the town, principally because it contained an implication of disaffection, the existence of which, in any degree whatever, would not be admitted. The lives and properties of the people are precarious indeed, if held at the mercy of men armed by their profession. Were such instances of insubordination general, military discipline would be at an end, and the existence of the state itself endangered.—July, 1793.

#### REPORT OF A COMMITTEE,

Appointed at a town-meeting, held on Sunday, 10th March, 1793, consisting of twenty-two gentlemen, including the sovereign, five magistrates, and the high constable of the barony of Belfast, to inquire into the causes and consequences of a dangerous riot, which happened the preceding evening.

[Rejected by the inhabitants at a town meeting, held on the 18th March; in consequence of which no authenticated account of this daring, premeditated, and unprovoked riot ever appeared.]

IN discharge of the trust reposed in us, we have heard the depositions of several witnesses, solemnly examined on oath before the magistrates.

It was proved, that between six and seven o'clock, on the evening of Saturday the 9th inst. an alarming riot began, in which several houses in the town were attacked and injured and some of the inhabitants wounded and maimed, by a number of dragoons of the 17th regt. who came into the town on the morning of that day, aided by two artillery men.

That by the active exertions of the magistrates, of Capt. Bourne, Aid du Camp to Major General Whyte, and of the

officers of the 17th dragoons and 55th regt. of foot, it was soon happily quelled.

It was proved, that some of the troopers, in the interval between their arrival in town and the commencement of the riot, had avowed their intention of committing outrage against certain individuals, who had been represented to them as disaffected.

That some of the rabble, consisting of ten or twelve boys and ragamuffins, as the witness expressed it, not one decent or reputable person having appeared among them, had insisted that a fidler in the street, who had been called on by some of the troopers to play "God save the King," should not play it; and also used disloyal expressions against his Majesty and all that took his part; that a stone was thrown by some of the rabble, and that the troopers then proceeded to demolish the signs of Dumourier, Franklin, and Mirabeau.

The public will judge, if these circumstances should be admitted as any palliation of the violent outrages committed afterwards by the troopers, on the persons and property of the unoffending inhabitants, whom the dragoons deemed disaffected; some of whom they could have no reason of thinking so, and who had not offered them the shadow of provocation.

From delicacy, and an earnest wish that peace and harmony should be effectually restored to the town, we forbear giving a minute detail of the evidence which appeared before us; and we trust that in future a perfect good understanding and concord will subsist in this town amongst all his Majesty's subjects, of every description, denomination and profession.

We have seen with indignation several erroneous representations of this riot; tending more to enflame than to conciliate the parties, which this report will prove to have been gross misrepresentations of it,—without authority—without evidence.

We cannot close this report, without observing that the



conduct of Maj. Gen. Whyte, commander in chief of his Majesty's forces in the province of Ulster, has given the highest satisfaction to the public, and that his vigilance, the judicious orders issued by him as commander in chief, and his ready compliance with the wishes of the inhabitants, evince that he is a steady friend to the peace of the community, and reflect equal honor on his prudence and humanity.

*Belfast, 18th March, 1793.*

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THE two following articles are not arranged according to their dates, but are inserted in the order they stand, for the purpose of connection with what precedes them.

On Monday evening, the 15th of April, about 8 o'clock, a party of the artillery and 38th regiment, who had arrived in this town on Friday last, attacked a sign of the late Doctor Franklin, which being made of copper and hung with iron, had withstood the sabres of the 17th dragoons; but on this occasion was laid prostrate by the assistance of a rope. They then attacked and pulled down the sign over the newspaper-office of the Northern Star. What their next enterprize would have been we know not; but at this period, the arrival of the sovereign, and a number of their officers, put a stop to the evening's amusement. The signs, which had been removed to some distance, were abandoned to their proper owners, and immediately replaced. None of the inhabitants were hurt on the occasion.

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SATURDAY night, 25th May, 1793, exhibited another of those military affrays to which this town has been subjected for some time past. We do not wish to enter into a detail of the violences committed; suffice it to say, that some of the inhabitants were dangerously wounded, none mortally.—Mr. Birnie, who received a stab in his back, and was otherwise much hurt, is in a fair way of recovery. The young gentle-

man who, at the commencement of this disagreeable business, pursued a young man of Mr. Birnie's with his sword, has, in a very honorable manner, made an ample apology, in consequence of which, no law proceedings will take place. Capt. Barber, of the artillery, has on this, as indeed on every other occasion, since he has been quartered in this town, behaved with the utmost propriety, displaying at once the spirit of a good officer, and the humanity of a good man.

It is generally believed Mr. Birnie would have been killed, had it not been for the spirited exertions of Capt. Barber and Lieut. George, in aid of the Sovereign.

About the first of March, 1793, the committee of the Belfast Regiment framed the following memorial, and they requested the concurrence of the Belfast Battalion. The committee of the battalion had acceded to the principle, and it only waited the vote of the respective bodies, at large, in order to be transmitted to the Lord Lieutenant. It was also intended to be proposed to the volunteers, by some members of the committees, that, in case the Lord Lieutenant should give a favorable answer, they should inform Gen. Whyte, that if a foreign enemy should land in this country, the volunteers would place themselves under his command.—

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

JOHN EARL OF WESTMORELAND,

LORD LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR OF  
IRELAND.

*The Memorial of the Volunteers of the Town of Belfast.*

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

We, your memorialists, associated together in the year 1778, to learn the use of arms, for the purpose of aiding in the protection of this kingdom, from foreign as well as domestic enemies :—Since that period we never ceased to be embodied, and we always held annual reviews.

We of late observe, with much regret, that we are charged with disaffection to the king, and to the form of government of this kingdom, in as much as we have, as armed men, expressed our sentiments respecting the necessity of a reform in the representation of the people, in the Commons House of Parliament. We do hereby declare in the most solemn manner, that the charge is a vile and infamous calumny. It is our warm attachment to the form of our government that induces us to be so ardent in the pursuit of the only measure which we think can perpetuate it.

We have been charged with adopting French principles—it is true we have frequently testified our joy at the success of France, when an host of foes had penetrated into that country for the purpose of restoring the old despotism. But this exultation at the triumphs of the French arose not from a wish to see all their practises (several of which we detest) introduced into this kingdom; but because that people were thus enabled to choose their own government—which we presume, is the natural and unalienable right of every people. And this principle leads us to abhor the idea of any foreign interference with the people or government of our own country:—We have said and do most certainly think that abuses exist in the administration of the government of Ireland—but we wish to see these abuses corrected by the good sense of the Irish nation, not by interference from abroad.

In the year 1781, when we were involved in a war, the principles of which we disliked as much as we do the present; when the fleets of the enemy rode triumphant on our seas, we stood forward and set an example to our brother volunteers, by offering our services to government against invasion of any kind. We presume our conduct had its effect, and are convinced the idea of invasion was then abandoned, from a knowledge of the strength and disposition of the volunteer army. And let us ask, should an invasion be now meditated, is it by



the few solitary regiments scattered over this kingdom, that our enemies would be deterred? No;—we are bold to say with our countrymen, who spoke a few days before from Dunganannon—that the volunteers are the only sure and natural defence of Ireland.

We hold it an incontrovertible fact, that citizens, by learning the use of arms, and employing them in defence of their country, do not lose or give up any of their rights: were it otherwise, why did we receive the unanimous thanks of both Houses of Parliament after our interference, as armed men, in the recovery of our trade in 1779, the recovery of an Irish legislature in 1782, and the calling for a reform in 1783?

Ever since our original formation we have given energy to the law, and maintained the most profound tranquillity in this town and neighbourhood, and this has of late been attended with some difficulty, owing to the recent introduction and wide extension of the cotton and other manufactures, which have brought with them a number of artizans from Manchester, Dublin, and elsewhere, strangers to the place, a few of whom introduced those dispositions of combination and outrage, to which this town was heretofore a stranger: and the vigilance of our Magistracy has had real cause on several occasions to recur to our bodies for assistance, and we are proud to say, they never called on us in vain, nor were our joint exertions ever unsuccessful in restoring order.

Three times have we marched to the distance of twenty miles to enforce the law and apprehend offenders—in all cases we succeeded, and in two of them, the reduction of forcible possessions, we could not have done so without our artillery. The last instance evinced a regard for the law, bordering on adoration.

An absentee landlord (Earl Hertford) had brought an ejectment against some of his poor tenantry, who lived in a wild uncivilized part of the country, whose ancestors had lived

in the place for upwards of a century, who were willing to pay the full rent, and whose principal crime was said to be election opposition. Notwithstanding the peculiar circumstances of the case—notwithstanding that the proprietor of the soil stood directly opposed to this town in election matters—yet on the application of the Sheriff, who had been twice repulsed from the place, and who had applied to the military in vain, we instantly accompanied him to the spot, where after an obstinate resistance of two hours, during which time we expended upwards of forty rounds of cannon shot, besides a smart discharge of musquetry, we obtained and delivered to the Sheriff the possession, and afterwards apprehended the offenders, who have been since convicted, and transported to Botany Bay.

A few months only have elapsed, since we received the thanks of Lord Hertford, of the Sheriff, and of the Magistrates of the county, assembled at the Quarter Sessions, for this exertion in support of the law.

For a long series of years we have been in the habit of mounting guard, by rotation, in this town nightly, when there was occasion, under the direction of the chief magistrate; whereby our townsmen have slept in quiet, without fear of the nocturnal depredator; and the consequence of this, together with the unwearied vigilance of the chief magistrate, has been, that robbery is at present unknown in Belfast.

We have lately increased our numbers, and renovated our discipline; and this, it has been said, with a view to intimidate the legislature: nothing more false; our objects are the same they ever were, the defence of our country and the support of the law; let it not be said, however, that we are by any means heedless of reform: no! it is the first desire of our hearts; but this reform we only wish to proceed from the general will of our countrymen; and we only hope it may be granted by parliament. But we are at all times ready and

willing to co-operate with government in opposing any party or set of men whatever, who should presume to impose any plan or wild ideas of reform upon the Irish nation, whether they come from abroad or originate at home.

Your memorialists having thus stated their conduct and their sentiments, beg leave to call your Excellency's attention to an act of Parliament, which lately became law in this kingdom, entitled "An act to prevent the importation of arms, gunpowder &c." and which act, as explained in passing through the House of Commons, was intended not to affect our "laudable institutions," but to operate against certain disturbers of the public peace, who have kept several counties of this kingdom in a ferment for some years past, and who still continue their depredations; but to the very great surprise and astonishment of your memorialists, an attempt has been made to extend it to us.

Your memorialists therefore request, that your Excellency would give such directions, conformable to the spirit of that act, and to the manner in which it was explained, when passing into a law, so as it may not be extended in any manner to affect us. Or if that shall not seem expedient to your Excellency, that your Excellency would be pleased to grant such licence as may enable us to keep our usual stock of ammunition, and to possess and use our cannon as heretofore, in support of the law, and in the defence of our country.

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AS Belfast and the county of Antrim are deeply concerned in the report of the Lords' Committees, dated 1793, we give a verbatim copy of it, as far as those places are alluded to.

"An unusual ferment has for some months past disturbed several parts of the North, particularly the town of Belfast, and the county of Antrim; it is kept up and encouraged by seditious papers and pamphlets, of the most dangerous ten-



dency, printed at very cheap rates in Dublin and Belfast, which issue almost daily from certain societies of men or clubs in both those places, calling themselves committees under various descriptions, and carrying on a constant correspondence with each other. These publications are circulated amongst the people with the utmost industry, and appear to be calculated to defame the government and parliament, and to render the people dissatisfied with their condition and with the laws. The conduct of the French is shamefully extolled, and recommended to the public view, as an example for imitation; hopes and expectations have been held up of their assistance by a resuscitation upon this kingdom, and prayers have been offered up at Belfast, from the pulpit, for the success of their arms, in the presence of military associations, which have been newly levied and arrayed in that town. A body of men associated themselves in Dublin, under the title of the First National Battalion; their uniform is copied from the French, green turned up with white, white waistcoat, and striped trowsers, gilt buttons, impressed with a harp, and letters importing, "First National Battalion;" no crown, but a device over the harp of a cap of liberty upon a pike;—two pattern coats were left at two shops in Dublin. Several bodies of men have been collected in different parts of the North, armed and disciplined under officers chosen by themselves, and composed mostly of the lowest classes of the people. These bodies are daily increasing in numbers and force;—they have exerted their best endeavors to procure military men of experience to act as their officers;—some of them having expressly stated that there were men enough to be had, but that officers were what they wanted. Stands of arms and gunpowder, to a very large amount, much above the common consumption, have been sent, within these few months past, to Belfast and Newry, and orders given for a much greater quantity, which it appears could be wanted only for military operations. At Belfast,

bodies of men in arms are drilled and exercised for several hours, almost every night, by candle-light; and attempts have been made to seduce the soldiery, which, much to the honor of the King's forces, have proved ineffectual. The declared object of these military bodies is to procure a reform of parliament, but the obvious intention of most of them appears to be to overawe the parliament and the government, and to dictate to both. The committee forbear mentioning the names of several persons, lest it should in any manner affect any criminal prosecution, or involve the personal safety of any man who has come forward to give them information. The result of their inquiries is, That, in their opinion, it is incompatible with the public safety and tranquillity of this kingdom, to permit bodies of men in arms to assemble when they please, without any legal authority; and that the existence of a self-created representative body, of any description of the King's subjects, taking upon itself the government of them, and levying taxes or subscriptions to, be applied at the discretion of such representative body, or of persons deputed by them, is also incompatible with the public safety and tranquillity."

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AT A MEETING OF THE  
DISSENTING MINISTERS OF BELFAST,  
HELD ON THE 11TH DAY OF MARCH, 1793:

IT was agreed, that the following declaration be published, and a copy of it transmitted to the Lord Chancellor.

Having seen in the report of the Lord's Committees, dated 7th March, 1793, the following words, viz. "Prayers have been offered up at Belfast, from the pulpit, for the success of their arms," meaning the arms of the French, "in the presence of military associations which have been newly levied and arrayed in that town,"

We, whose names are hereunto annexed, stated ministers of distinct Protestant Dissenting Congregations in the town of

Belfast, do hereby solemnly declare, each of us for himself, that the information given to their Lordships of the Committees, upon this subject is, as far as concerns us, totally groundless.

JAMES BRYSON,  
P. VANCE,  
WILL. BRUCE, D. D.

Principal of the Belfast Academy.

Since the French declaration of war against Great Britain and Ireland was known here, I did not pray for the "Success of their arms;" I do not recollect that I ever used the words; I am certain that I never prayed for success to the French arms before any military association.

SINCLARE KELBURN.

Certain circumstances having prevented me from attending the meeting of the Dissenting Ministers of Belfast, on the 11th instant; at which they agreed to exculpate themselves from certain charges contained in the report of the Lords' Committees, relative to them, by a solemn declaration, that the information given to their lordships, on which the said charges are founded, is totally groundless:—In this declaration, as subscribed by the Rev. Messrs. Bryson, Vance, and Bruce, I for myself, fully and perfectly concur.

W. CARMICHAEL.

*Belfast, 12th March, 1793.*

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Extract of a public letter, dated 11th March, from the Right Hon. Secretary R. Hobart, to the Sovereign of Belfast.

"YOU will be pleased to apprise the leading persons concerned in the armed associations of Belfast, that it is deemed to be the indispensable duty of government to forbid all unlawful meetings, under whatever pretence they may assemble, which spreads terror among his Majesty's liege subjects—and it will be right to acquaint them, that if after the warning held



out to them by the proclamation, they shall persist in their illegal assemblies, the magistrates will think themselves bound to disperse the same, and bring the persons concerned therein to the just punishment of the law.

“ It is hoped that the proclamation will of itself have full effect, and that no person whatever, will attempt to violate the law in that behalf, especially as ignorance thereof can, after such warning, be no longer pleaded. If, however, any body of men shall, in defiance of said proclamation, appear in arms, it will then be the duty of the magistrates to direct them to disperse; and if they shall fail to disperse upon the order of the magistrate, such magistrate will arrest the leaders of the said body, and if he shall be resisted in the execution of his duty, he is to apply to General Whyte, who will afford him such assistance as shall be necessary to enable him to carry the laws into execution. And, if any body shall again assemble in arms in Belfast, and the neighbourhood, the magistrate will exert himself to prevent the same, for which purpose, General Whyte has directions to give every assistance in his power.”

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BY THE LORD LIEUTENANT AND COUNCIL OF  
IRELAND.

*A PROCLAMATION.*

WESTMORLAND.

WHEREAS it appears by the report from the Lords' Committees, appointed to inquire into the causes of the disorders and disturbances which prevail in several parts of this kingdom, that certain seditious and ill affected persons in several parts of the north of this kingdom, particularly in the town of Belfast, have endeavored to foment and encourage discontent, and by seditious publications circulated amongst the people, and calculated to defame the government and the parlia-

ment, have endeavored to render people dissatisfied with their condition, and with the laws.

And whereas it appears to us, by the said report, that several bodies of men have been collected into armed associations, and have been levied and arrayed in the said town of Belfast, and that arms and gunpowder, to a very large amount, have been sent thither; that bodies of men in arms are drilled and exercised by day and by night, and that the declared object of the said armed bodies is redress of alleged grievances, but that the obvious intention of most of them appears to be to overawe the parliament and the government, and to dictate to both.

And whereas these dangerous and seditious proceedings tend to the disturbance of the public peace, the obstruction of good order and government, to the great injury of public credit, and the subversion of the constitution, and have raised great alarms in the minds of his Majesty's loyal subjects.

Now we the Lord Lieutenant and Council, being determined to maintain the public peace against all attempts to disturb the same, and being desirous to forewarn all such persons as might unadvisedly incur the penalties of the law in this behalf, by concurring in practices of a tendency so dangerous and alarming, do hereby strictly charge all persons whomsoever, on their allegiance to his Majesty, to abstain from committing such offences respectively.

And we do charge and command the magistrates, sheriffs, bailiffs, and other peace-officers, having jurisdiction within the said town of Belfast, and the several districts adjacent thereto, to be careful in preserving the peace within the same, and to disperse all seditious and unlawful assemblies; and if they shall be resisted, to apprehend the offenders, that they may be dealt with according to law.

Given at the Council Chamber in Dublin, the 11th day of March, 1793.

Fitz-Gibben, C. R. Dublin, Charles Cashel, Waterford, Westmeath, Shannon, Bellamont, Charles Fitz-Gerald, Glendore, Dillon, Valentia, Pery, Gosford, Clonmell, Loftus, Muskerry, Mountjoy, Carleton, J. Beresford, J. H. Hutchinson, Lucius O'Brien, J. Blaquiere, H. Langrishe, T. Conolly, Theo. Jones, Henry King, H. T. Clements, R. Cunningham, James Cuff, R. Hobart, D. Latouche, J. Monk Mason, J. Fitz-Gerald, R. Longfield, W. Forward.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

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In compliance with the proclamation, the volunteers ceased to parade, or any longer to appear in military array.

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## STRICTURES

ON THE TEST TAKEN BY CERTAIN OF  
THE SOCIETIES OF UNITED IRISHMEN,

WITH ANSWERS TO THE SAME.

Originally published in the Belfast News-letter.

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### STRICTURE—NO. I.

"I, A B, in the presence of God do pledge myself to my country, that I will use all my abilities and influence in the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in parliament; and as a means of absolute and immediate necessity, in the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will endeavor, as much as lies in my ability, to forward a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interest, a communion of rights and an union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions, without which every reform of parliament must be partial, not national, inadequate to the



wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this country."

This test, originally taken by the Societies of United Irishmen in Dublin, has since been adopted by a respectable community of the same denomination in Belfast—associated, no doubt, with the best views and for the noblest purposes, but actuated by a zeal more ardent in the pursuit of their object than discreet in the means of obtaining it. It has lately been rejected by other societies and individuals engaged in the same cause. The following exposition of its principles is now made, in order to justify those who have declined entering into this engagement, to relieve those who have formed it from the consequence of their imprudence, and to prevent others from precipitating themselves into such an embarrassing situation.

1. This test professes to bind every man who takes it, to use all his abilities and influence, and to endeavor as much as lies in his ability, to attain certain objects.—If this be a mere rhetorical flourish, it is improper in so solemn an engagement, being calculated to deceive, instead of inspiring any just confidence; that is, if "all" signifies only some, every one may use as little as he pleases, and the persons to whom he is pledged know not what to depend on. If these words be construed in their strict sense, they imply that every duty and business, domestic, commercial, political, and religious, must be relinquished till these objects be attained, unless he can devote all his abilities and influence to one object, and reserve the rest of them for another!

2. One object to which the society is bound exclusively of every other pursuit is, an impartial representation of the Irish Nation. The word "impartial," in its original sense, which at the same time agrees best with the purpose and spirit of the United Irishmen, imports that every man, adult or a minor, nay, every woman, in short every rational being, shall have

equal weight in electing representatives. In the most limited signification which can be admitted, it means, that every man of mature age shall have a vote for members of parliament without regard to property ; for it would be inconsistent with " impartiality " to require a pecuniary qualification to enable him to exercise the elective franchise ; to make liberty a vendible commodity ; to make a scruple of taxing a man, but none of hanging him, by a law to which he had not consented. This embraces a great variety of the most difficult questions in politics, upon which a wise man would hesitate to commit himself. It includes in particular the subject of universal suffrage, respecting which the greatest men of our own time have differed. It goes far beyond the American, and even the French constitution, which is reckoned rather a hazardous experiment ; not to mention the British, which is a subject of history and experience.

3. The test pretends to pledge those who take it, to endeavor as much as lies in their ability to forward a communion of rights and an union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions ; that is, that all men shall have common rights and equal power ; that the majority shall have power in proportion to their numbers, and consequently if the Roman Catholics be ten times as numerous as the Presbyterians, they shall have ten times as much power ; of course, being so great a majority of the people, they may take into their hands the exercise of government, the enacting and repealing of laws, the administration of justice, the establishment of a religion, and the new-modelling of the constitution. This, and the preceding sections, involve matter, with respect to which the wise, the learned and the patriotic, for many generations have disputed ; but on which some of the United Irishmen pledge themselves, not only that they now agree, but that they will continue to agree, till the purpose be obtained ; that is, till it be too late to change their minds. And though they should

change their minds before they have obtained it, they are still to be bound by these mental chains to prosecute their plan, even in contradiction to conviction and conscience.

Against this ensnaring oath, it is becoming in every man to caution his fellow-citizens, and it is the duty of a minister to warn his people. This is more especially true, when they are convened to discuss a great question, under an idea, that they are pledged to resist conviction and to persist in error.

4. As this test is calculated to oblige men always to retain the same opinion, it is unphilosophical and inconsistent with the dignity and primary right of man,—freedom of thought. As it engages them to persevere, though they should change their opinions, it is sinful. As it prejudices the most difficult and important principles, at the very time when they are about to be discussed, it is presumptuous and uncandid. And as it is either impracticable or immoral, it cannot be binding, and ought to be openly renounced, lest any one should be deceived.

The oath “never to separate until the constitution should be established,” which was taken by the National Assembly of France after they had been excluded from their house by the troops, was a declaration, that they would persist in the discharge of the trust committed to them by their constituents; and therefore strictly moral and obligatory. It implies no exception, nor reservation, except in case of irresistible force, sickness, or death, which are always understood to be excepted.

It is creditable to this town and country, that some individuals, and whole societies of United Irishmen, have declined this oath, though, no doubt, as zealous as any of their brethren.

5. The style is not that of a test, pledge, or oath. It does not carry with it the deliberation, precision, or perspicuity of such an engagement. It is declamatory, full of point and antithesis. It is the composition of a jesuitical, a rhetorical, or



an enthusiastic mind : for either through craft, vanity, or precipitation, it is calculated to deceive. Thus, lest the force of the word "impartial" should be discerned, it is yoked with "adequate ;" as if they meant the same thing ; and lest union of power should shock the minority of the kingdom, it is so smothered by a crowd of plausible expressions, that many of those who have taken the oath, seem never to have observed the phrase. In like manner, "partial" is involved in the blaze of a splendid, or the fumes of a smoky phraseology. The French and American constitutions are partial ; that is, franchise is restricted to property : the British, in its best days, was partial ; for it excluded some civil and some religious denominations of the people from any share in the government. The United Irishmen therefore swear, that these are not national, but delusive ; inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of a people.

6. As the test does not speak of any period of time in which these changes are to take place, it must be understood of the present instant : for if it leave every one to defer these exertions as long as he shall think proper, the societies cannot act together ; the Roman Catholics can have no security that they will ever act ; and their emancipation must be gradual and progressive. While therefore the United Irishmen conceive themselves subject to the obligation of this oath, they cannot vote for any thing short of immediate and universal enfranchisement.

7. Oaths concerning future opinion or belief, entrap and imprison the mind. A freeman loves and thanks even the enemy who would lead him to the truth, or convince him that he is in an error ; because he can avail himself of his kindness. But he who has sworn thinks he cannot change, and therefore hates even his friend that would disturb his ignorant and bigoted repose. He accordingly associates only with his fel-

low-jurors, who foster his prejudices, influence his passions, and throw dust in his eyes ; so that, when he issues from his club-room, and meets the old, staunch and effectual friends of civil and religious liberty, he mistakes them for dotards, courtiers, and sycophants.

It is curious to observe, how generally and rapidly creeds and confessions, even on political subjects, lead to intolerance and spiritual pride ; which naturally engender petulance and rage, low intrigue, and disingenuous artifice. But even the rustic, when he heard two logicians disputing in Latin, could tell, that he who seemed to lose his temper, had certainly lost his cause. Feb. 10, 1792.

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### ANSWER.

NO. I.

#### TO THE STRICTURES ON THE TEST OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN.

“ I, A B, in the presence of God, do pledge myself to my country, that I will use all my abilities and influence in the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation of the Irish nation in parliament ; and as a means of absolute and immediate necessity in the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will endeavor, as much as lies in my ability, to forward a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interest, a communion of rights, and an union of power, among Irishmen of all religious persuasions, without which every reform in parliament must be partial, not national, inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this country.”

An Irishman, the dearest wish of whose heart is, that his countrymen should love one another, unite, and be free, has read, with extreme concern, some ingenious, though fretful, strictures on the test taken by the United Societies of Belfast and Dublin. The paper appears to be written too much with

the spirit of a partizan, who makes or exasperates hostility, rather than with that of a patriot, anxious, at this time, to extinguish the first spark of civil discord ; or of a philanthropist, anxious at all times, to maintain peace on earth and good will among men.—The argument seems cold casuistry ; the style betrays pique and irritation.—The one must be refuted ; and with respect to a little peevishness of epithet in the other, whoever notices it least, will answer it best, and best maintain his own superiority.

1. The objection against the use of the terms “all my abilities and influence,” and “as much as lies in my ability,” is founded on a sophism that runs like a flaw through the whole composition. Two senses of a phrase are taken, the most opposite that can be attributed to it :—one the most loose, and another the most limited ; one the most strict and philosophical, another the most vague and indefinite ; and then the author holds them out, saying, of these two you must take one. He keeps swinging between the extremes of signification, and always shoots past the plain and accepted meaning which lies before him in common use and daily life. His dilemma is always fallacious from its partial enumeration. These phrases in the test are not addressed to rhetoricians who bask in moonshine, or to philosophers who strain at gnats of objections, but to the common sense of common men. They are taken as they are understood, only in a popular acceptance, at what may be called their exchangeable value in the market of the world. The societies neither promise, like the Disciples, to forsake all other pursuits, to suspend all other duties, to make a personal abandonment which must of itself prove public ruin, and destroy that credit and influence which we wish to possess for the purposes of the test : nor, on the other extreme, do they make any rhetorical flourish. They simply and sincerely promise, that by their own exertions, and by any influence they may have on others, they will co-operate



in attaining a particular end, according to their different talents and opportunities, and as far as is compatible with other necessary duties, a condition so plainly implied that it is needless to express it. If hereafter there should be no exertion on their part, or if their actions do not correspond with their words, the public, whom they have attested to the consistency of their conduct, must be their judge; and the condemnation of that public is the penalty they must suffer. The test is a standard of measurement which they give to the public, in order to facilitate this judgment. Without such a test, "every one may indeed use as little exertion as he pleases," because there is none to whom he stands pledged, not even to himself; whereas this test forms not only a public record which obliges him to exertion, if he has any regard to public opinion, but it is a record on the soul, an external conscience which stimulates to duty, and fixes and embodies fugitive resolution.— "All our abilities" is a phrase neither taken in its loosest nor in its strictest sense, and there is room enough to rest safely between the horns of this dilemma. It is taken by the people in a popular sense, and they refer the derivative sense, and the philosophic sense, to the college or the cloister.

2. In the same manner, the author of this bilious publication extracts every sense out of the word "impartial," except the obvious one. This term is evidently suggested by, and is solely referable to, that religious persuasion which is at present most partially excluded from civil rights, as the word "adequate" relates to a representation in Parliament, justly proportioned to the end in view—the happiness of the whole people. "Impartial" is a plain word, expressive of a practical truth, that no government can satisfy our wishes which is not equitable, free from regard to party or persuasion, equal in its distributions, alike to all; and he who interprets the term in any far-fetched sense, or involves any speculative questions in its meaning, is only catching at a star and stumbling over

straws. The test turns its attention, merely, in the term made use of, to that monstrous partiality which excommunicates and exiles a whole people, without one overt act on their part to justify such oppression; and were this prominent partiality done away, other speculative questions, like those alluded to, might come under political discussion, which need not now be answered, as they are not now in contemplation. Even on the supposition of their being agitated at present, I cannot think the term "impartial" could ever be found inapplicable; but it is enough to repeat, that the word is here plainly applied to the Roman Catholics, who have found in government nothing but grievance, and in law, nothing but penalty. He says "that we are bound to one object exclusively of every other pursuit"—a most palpable mis-statement, as I have proved before.

3. The test pledges those who take it to endeavor as much as in them lies, "to forward a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interests, a communion of rights, and an union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions." The verb, to *forward*, which is connected with all this portion of the test, has been wholly overlooked by this gentleman, and if attended to must comprehend and conciliate all parties. The end in view is a reform impartial and adequate. The four articles common affection, common interests, common rights and common exertion, (the true meaning of "union of power," not that which the author strains from it,) are the means immediately to be put in train for attaining this end, the four wheels which are to carry us progressively to the goal, to perfect equality of rights, interests, franchises and privileges; resisting any ascendancy of party in the common-weal, is declared to be a measure necessary to and implied in an adequate representation. If that object be desirable to-morrow, the means must be put in forwardness to-day; but many things prove, and among the rest the stile and sentiments of this paper, that

we are still far from having a brotherhood of affection, that an interested attachment to sects takes place of social union, and that a part is in the consideration, of many, greater than the whole. Under this impression (not only distant from the goal, but the wheels broken) we lament, that a system of legal and constitutional equality is at present impracticable, that some plan of penurious policy will take its place; yet this test engages us never to lose sight of the complete redemption of the nation, and as we value the end, to forward the means with unremitting activity. Did complete enfranchisement take place this instant, there could not happen for a long time an equality of political power, the acquisition of which must in its nature, depend on the gradual acquisition of property, and therefore be gradual itself. As the Catholic landlord influences his Protestant tenantry, the Protestant landlords must still have influence over theirs, proportioned to the overplus of property in their hands at present; and during this interval, the mental subjection complained of, tho' by no means justly, must disappear. But it is laughable to hear this gentleman forming his ratios between the political power of the Catholics and Presbyterians, as if the latter had a share in the government to give away; as if their clergy had contrived to erase the word Protestant, and put Presbyterian ascendancy in its place; as if they were not themselves fed by royal bounty; as if there was national government; as if the people had any control over established legislators, established judges, and established clergy. Whatever the Presbyterian clergy may sigh for, the laity are pretty unanimous in wishing for the sovereignty of the people, not of any party; the ascendancy of christianity, not of any church: but what should be condemned is that hauteur which this gentleman and others assume in speaking of the Catholics, when there is little difference between them, when the nation is unrepresented, and when every law is



truly penal which usurps a right, and confirms the usurpation. We must all knock at the door of our *excellent* constitution, and if we are to gain admission to the rights of man, why should not they?—We have no constitution to give or grant, but must strive to get one. By ourselves we strove in vain, and we must now strive all together.

“Though they should change their minds before they have obtained it ;” these words must mean, that though before the attainment of a reform, we should perceive the danger of a communion of rights, yet by the test we should still be bound to procure it. Not at all.—The test binds to two things, adequate reform, and communion of rights ; and should it appear that the latter would be destructive of the former, as it would in that case be impossible to procure them conjointly, one must necessarily be relinquished ; which should give way, the end or the means, is plain, and in this case the society is not only justifiable but bound to change its mind, as well as the prosecution of their plan in some of its parts.

4. The test, it is said, obliges men always to retain the same opinion. I deny the assertion. It is merely to make conduct conformable to this profession of principles. I voluntarily took the test, because the truths contained in it appear to me so indubitable that the whole frame of my mind must be changed before I change my opinion. This change is by no means impossible, but it is so highly improbable, that acting as every man must do on high probability, I do not hesitate to pledge myself to my country, that my conduct shall coincide with my declarations ; and if so improbable a thing should happen as a change of opinion, I should not hesitate to declare openly that alteration, and throw myself on the verdict of my country, whom I have attested as witness, and whom I appeal to as judge. I should in like manner engage to continue a christian, though it is possible my future belief in that doctrine may be shaken. When the National Assem-

bly of France even swear that they will support the constitution as established in 90 and 91, are they obliged for ever to retain the same opinion of that constitution as they do at present. The test is solely meant to bind a man from altering his conduct when he does not change his opinion, to prevent him paltering with his conscience, and prevent his tergiversation. If a man really, and bona fide changes his opinion, no test, nor oath could be binding; and if his conduct be the same when his principles are changed, he must sin to his conscience, and is perjured in that case, not for breaking his oath, but for keeping it. No oath could be taken without an exception of this kind, for he who swears that he will always be of the same opinion, swears to an impossibility. If our declaration continues without disavowal on our part, and our conduct contradicts it, we stand falsified to the public: if our principles change, and our actions do not change along with them, we are condemned by our conscience.

5. The stile of this test is said to be declamatory, full of point and antithesis. I cannot discover through the whole one sentence that is not substantial; one figure of rhetoric, one pointed stroke, or one contrast of words and sentiments which creates an antithesis. To assert indeed that two numerous societies "with the best views and the noblest purposes," would voluntarily and deliberately form, take, tender, and adhere to an 'ensnaring' oath, "the composition of a jesuitical, rhetorical, or enthusiastic mind, leading to intolerance and spiritual pride, and naturally engendering petulance and rage, low intrigue, and disingenuous artifice," is not merely a verbal antithesis. It is an antithesis of the heart. It is—but let me restrain myself. He is my countryman—perhaps my friend. How can I make use of the weapons of invective, when in the opposite ranks I think I see a brother?—The test is sufficiently definite and precise for the common acceptance of many sensible and ingenuous men; and the numbers that

have taken and are daily taking it, sufficiently prove that is so. It is not in the power of words to satisfy a lawyer or a logician. One multiplies words, and the other splits meaning, until a plain head is bewildered, and a candid heart is disgusted. The style of the test is a trifle.—Are the sentiments just?—Is its spirit honest?

6. The United Irishmen would certainly vote for immediate and universal enfranchisement to the Catholics; but if prejudices be still so strong as to make total emancipation impracticable, and that all the people of Ireland cannot as yet enjoy by law, what they are entitled to by nature, by merit, and by sufferings; the societies will still congratulate their Catholic brethren that their load has been lightened, that their deliverance is only protracted, and they will felicitate themselves, in having been, as they will be, in the misfortunes of their countrymen, faithful allies; in their prosperity, if it should arrive, rejoicing friends. They, indeed, would make no terms with such a system of proscription; nor enter into any composition with an evil principle, abhorring as they do, that manichean policy which gives equal sway to the divine genius of the constitution and to the demon of destruction.

Far from temporizing expedients, or from allowing penal law to debauch the spirit of that constitution, they would eject the incongruous and contradictory phrase from its very language. Far from huckstering the rights of man, or forestalling the bounties of God, they would like that divine word which said, let there be light, and chaos became order; proclaim, let there be liberty throughout the land, and the present confusion would be peace. No. Not a perchance of persecution should remain, not a suggestion to intolerance, not a torpid statute which might find in the breast of any bigot heat and venom. If this people really be as they are described, let open war be made on them: raze their habitations and sow salt around them; but if they be misrepresent-



ed, let no awkward and bungling compromise be made with such ruinous error, nor let the public mind and capacity be kept a sterile swamp, as long as foreign influence and interest may think proper to retard its cultivation. Had this brotherhood of affection, sameness of interest, union of rights and of exertion been proposed and prosecuted 50 years ago, the present would be a prouder day for Ireland ; but still its adoption now may anticipate half a century the consummation of civil and political religious freedom.—Our eyes may still see our country thrice blest before they close for ever. Much progress in the conversion of the Protestant mind to sound political justice, and public morality, has been made in a very short time, and the objections offered to comprehending the Catholics in the constitution, are such as strike most at first sight, but the effect of all reasoning and consideration on the subject, has been to lessen the first impression.

7. The test is not an oath, nor are the terms convertible. It is not an oath, because neither they who take it, nor the public, to whom it is addressed, understand it as an oath. No man can be 'entrapped' by giving a simple exposition of the principles which he maintained before his entrance into the society, and which if he does not maintain, he is unfit to be a member. There is always a medium between the extremes of this gentleman, and he would push us through the river while the bridge is just beside us. This test is a serious, manly manifestation to our country and to the world, of our political principles and our intended practice.

It is the essence of an oath to refer immediately to the divinity. In the one, we invoke the vengeance of God as the penalty. In the other, we resign ourselves to the judgment of the public. The breach of the one is perjury. That of the other, notorious political inconsistency. The one has the seal of religion impressed on it. The other is a permanent symbol, a civil bond of attachment to each other, and to a

common cause, done in a solemn manner, and with a meaning and effect beyond the obligation of a mere promise. There is plainly a gradation and scale of obligation, or we could not think that God would punish more severely the breach of an oath than that of a promise. There may be a promise—a protestation—verbal—written—a test—and an oath the strictest tie of all.

It is said, that the test will bind an upright man as strictly as his oath, and so will his bare promise; but it is not the less true, that in general opinion, a test of this kind is as much a superior obligation to a promise, as it is inferior to an oath; and in forming societies, we must take the world generally, not individually. A test without having either the sanctions, or incurring the penalties of an oath, takes a much stronger hold of the mind and memory, than mere nominal subscription, often forgotten, sometimes contradicted. It belts in a society better, and gives it greater energy. Instead of a mind unassimilated, aggregate, beaten out to a large surface, without strength or cohesion, it compresses into a solid mass. Without it, there was, as there would be, volition without, and zeal without, activity. I am very sensible that strong attractions generate strong antipathies; but may not too much nicety and fastidiousness of conduct, or of criticism, have worse effects, by cutting the mind off from the active, living mass, wrapping it up in a sort of sullen insulation, and changing to a pillar of salt, what was a pillar of society.

The gentleman concludes, and pins the web of sophistry by confounding the effects of religious creeds and confessions, imposed by human authority, usurping the rights of God, with an engagement purely civil, voluntarily entered into between man and man; and by suborning the principles of Protestant Dissenters to give evidence against their present most honorable conduct as men and citizens.

I conclude by saying, that the author of this paper de-

serves much greater credit for his courage, than his prudence ; and I think much the same of him as of Isadas, to whom the Ephori decreed a crown in honor of the valor he had displayed, but imposed on him a heavy fine, for having fought without either shield or buckler.

FEBRUARY 21, 1792.

## STRICTURE,

NO. II.

### ON THE TEST OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN.

Orkon paraiteasai, ei men oion te, eis a pan ; ei de me, ek ton enonton.

EPICETET. ENCHIR. 44.

Avoid an oath, if possible, altogether ; if not, as far as you can.

THIS test is an instrument, calculated to affect the sentiments and conduct of the nation on a very important question. Its structure and tendency should therefore be freely and minutely examined ; and though it may be impossible to criticise it without some reference to the mind which conceived it, and the hands which put it in motion, it must nevertheless be discussed. Truth must never be sacrificed out of tenderness to error. It has accordingly been taken to pieces. It has been demonstrated, that if understood in a literal sense, it is absurd, immoral, and ineffective. This sense is therefore not only given up by its advocates, but eagerly disclaimed. Nay, an attempt to give it this construction has been styled captious and absurd. This is what the writer of the strictures expected and waited for. He wished to know whether this interpretation would be abandoned, before he proceeded to complete his plan. He has now ascertained, that the most zealous friends of this engagement, relinquish the grammatical signification ; and that he may, without interruption, attempt to show, that in its rhetorical sense, it is nugatory and fallacious.

The rhetorical sense of an oath is such a ludicrous idea,



that he would not use the expression could he find another to describe the construction now given to the test ; but when he considers the capricious significations which its interpreters have imposed on the plainest words, he must think that they have been swearing by trope and figure.

We are now taught—

1st. That a test taken in the presence of God is not as strict a tie, nor consequently as obligatory as an oath.

2d. That by this engagement a man is bound to use only as much of his abilities and influence as he can spare.

3d. That an impartial reform is synonymous with a partial one, and may exclude a great majority of the free agents of the Irish nation (even leaseholders for 999 years) provided it include Roman Catholic freeholders.

4th. That an union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions signifies only common exertion, and that though this is a means of immediate necessity, it is only to be forwarded progressively on four wheels ; or, as it was lately expressed, from time to time, as speedily as the circumstances of the country and the welfare of the whole kingdom will permit.

5th. That the test does not oblige men always to retain the same opinion ; that they are, consequently, bound only while they are taking it : because they may change their opinions the next moment, in which case, no test, no oath can bind them ; that many, perhaps all, may have changed their minds and consequently at this day neither their associates nor their country can depend upon their engagement.

And 6th. That if before the attainment of a reform, we should perceive the danger of a communion of rights, the Catholics may be left in the lurch, consistently with this test.

With the help of these data, let us now paraphrase this Highgate oath, agreeably to the mental reservations of one of the United Irishmen and its ablest defender.

I, A B, do not swear, but merely in the presence of God, pledge myself to my country, that, till I think better of it, I will use as much of my abilities and influence as I can spare in the attainment of a partial, which I deem an adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament; and as a means of absolute and immediate necessity, in the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will, unless I change my mind, endeavor as much as lies in my inclination, to forward progressively a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interest, a communion of rights, and a common exertion among Irishmen of all religious persuasions; without which every reform in Parliament must be partial—and, any thing herein contained to the contrary notwithstanding, I pledge myself in the presence of God, that no partial reform can be national, but must be inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the happiness and freedom of this country.

This seems to be the spirit of the oath; but be it construed as it will, it cannot answer any valuable purpose. There are but three ends, that such an engagement can be intended to answer—security to one's self—to his associates—or to his country.

1. With regard to the person himself, I admit that the phraseology of an oath is of little importance. It is an affair between him and his Maker, who are both acquainted with the real intention. But at the same time it is altogether unnecessary to express his sentiments by words, to him who searcheth the heart. Though the style, however, be a consideration of no moment, the purposes to which we bind ourselves should be carefully scrutinized; and their character has been well expressed in these words—the truths contained in the oath or vow should appear to be so indubitable, that the whole frame of my mind must be changed before I can change my opinion. Now men who have had much commerce with wise men, or with themselves, will admit that such truths are

not very numerous; and that as few of them belong to the class of politics as to any other branch of knowledge. As a remarkable instance of this truth, I shall refer the reader to a composition\*, which I esteem the most exquisite morsel of genius and eloquence that this island can boast; as I esteem the reputed author to be the most eminent ornament and ablest advocate, decus & tutamen, of the Catholic cause. If such a person has changed, as, I am well informed, he has, which of the United Irishmen will pretend to be immutable? Such a vow is therefore altogether unnecessary and precipitate. If there be any danger of a change of opinion, it is rash; if there be none, it is plainly superfluous.

2. It is equally vain to imagine, that a rhetorical, vague, and declamatory form of words, requiring so much ingenious explanation, and liable to be understood in such a variety of senses, can give any assurance even to associates. It can never prevent a man from altering his conduct when he does not change his opinion—for if he be capable of acting contrary to his principles, he will make no scruple of belying his opinion, or pretending to change it: especially as he has been taught that his declaration does not refer immediately to the Deity, who is the sole witness of his dissimulation, but to his country, from whom he can conceal it; that he does not invoke the vengeance of God, but simply resigns himself to the judgment of the public, who know nothing of the matter; and that his crime is not perjury, but secret political inconsistency.

3. Now, if a man may slip out of this noose without the knowledge of his associates, how can an engagement from which he is at liberty to swerve upon every change of opinion, respecting very nice and difficult questions, give any security or assurance to his country?

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\* See 5th letter of ORELLANA, p. 186, of this work.



This oath, then, is not calculated to answer any one good purpose; but, like all other engagements of this kind, it has a lamentable efficacy in fomenting bigotry, and banishing liberal and enlightened men from every society in which it is imposed. It seems to inspire those who have taken it with a notion that they are the chosen few, from whom alone their country can hope for redemption, and that political orthodoxy is confined within the pale of their society. They should consider, that whatever may be thought of their intentions, these associations are condemned and shunned by those who formerly gave incontestable proof of wisdom and patriotism; that many of the most enlightened and liberal men in the nation think they have greatly injured the Catholic cause; and that, by the precipitate and unqualified manner in which they have forced the question, they have awakened antipathies and prejudices which had slept for 50 years. To come nearer home, they have exposed the Protestant Dissenters of Ulster to gross misrepresentation and groundless calumny—they have nearly annihilated the honorable and useful influence which the town of Belfast maintained in the adjacent country; and if the justly popular candidate for the representation of the county of Antrim, shall meet with any serious opposition—or if the union and independence of the county shall be endangered, it will be owing to the violence and imprudence of those who attempted to connect the independent interest with the Roman Catholic question.

Notwithstanding their monopoly of philanthropy, the writer of these strictures must say, that no man wishes more ardently for the time, when the good of the whole kingdom will admit of a complete coalition among its inhabitants. No man more zealously exclaims—

“*Quis finis erit discordiarum?—Ecquando communem hanc esse patriam licebit?*”

When shall our dissensions have an end?—When may we consider this as our common country?—*March 2, 1792.*

ISADAS.\*

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ANSWER.

NO. II.

TO THE CONTINUATION OF  
THE STRICTURES ON THE TEST OF THE  
UNITED IRISHMEN.

“The coat is without seam, woven from the top throughout, let us not rent it.”—“In veste varietas sit, scissura not sit.”

THE continuation of strictures on the test, adds a new color, but no new light to the subject. After having darkened plain meaning by verbal criticism, it is now made to assume the glare of rhetoric; and the dexterous hand only shifts the prism which splits the beam of truth. All that is said here has been better said before, and it is only necessary to place one paraphrase opposite to another in order to correct palpable misrepresentation.

“I, A B, do not swear, but merely in the presenee of God, pledge myself to my country, and take it to witness, that, until I shall really and truly think differently on the subject, I will use as much of my abilities and influence, as I can spare from my other necessary and important concerns, in the attainment of a representation of the Irish nation in parliament, impartial, with respect to all religious distinctions, and adequate, with respect to the body of the people at large; and as a means of absolute and immediate necessity, in the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will, unless I

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\* Isadas was a Spartan,—who, though he fought naked, “without shield or buckler,” against an enemy armed at all points, returned victorious, and without a wound, after exerting himself to save his country from being ruined in one day by a host of Boeotians.

really and in truth change my conviction on the subject, endeavor, as much as lies in my ability, to forward progressively, a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interest, a communion of rights, and a joint exertion among Irishmen of all religious persuasions; without which, any reform in parliament must be partial; and nothing herein contained being to the contrary, I pledge myself in the same presence, that it is my opinion, that no partial reform can be national, but must be inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this country."—The term 'immediate' is plainly applied to that necessity which is certainly absolute and urgent, though the brotherhood of affection can not be immediately accomplished, but only progressively forwarded.

This continuation seems written to pay a compliment, and to fix an imputation, "*Commendatio ex injuria*." To that imputation of inconsistency, it seems only necessary to reply---

1. The circumstances of the times, as well as persons, have changed, in the very manner wished for, and the mind must change along with them. To commercial interest, a middle and mediating rank has rapidly grown up in the Catholic community, and produced that enlargement of mind, that energy of character, and that self-dependence which men acquire whose interests do not hang at the mercy of this or that individual, but on general consumption. Will any person assert that such men are not as well qualified to exercise civil franchise as the most of our 40s. Protestant freeholders, whose corruption is in reality occasioned by the unjust partition of political power, and who are tempted to convert their monopoly into money, because its partial distribution has given it an artificial value much beyond what nature and reason allow it. The unjust detention of liberty from others, operates as a curse and a blast upon those who have hoarded the common good. It rots in their possession. It corrupts when not par-



taken ; and he who has more than his exact share of freedom, becomes in one situation of life a tyrant, and in another, degenerates and putrifies into a slave. It is the judgment of God on all nations and all men who presume to appropriate his gifts, and to make of right a privilege or a prerogative. The Catholic mind has cast off its feudality, and that person would in truth be inconsistent who kept prejudice as it were at nurse, when by nearer approach and closer acquaintance, he finds in that body a nationality of sentiment, and a fidelity in engagement, demanding respect and admiration ; while he knows it to be his general duty as it is his dear delight, to foster the spirit of freedom wherever it may be found, especially in the breasts of his countrymen.

2. It is in reality the civil incapacity which has made and must continue the moral incapacity. It is the will to be free, which makes the capability ; and the first sigh that the heart sends forth for liberty is a sufficient indication of potency to enjoy it. To affect a wish for their ability to possess freedom, while you continue the penal code which makes them incapable, is cruel mockery. A capacity for freedom is as natural to man as a capacity to eat or to drink ; it is an instinct of nature, not a consequence of education. Man is often indeed the creature of habit, and he may learn to be a slave, as he may learn to drink alcohol, and to eat *asa-fetida*, but you will never break him of these bad customs by degrees ; it is only by giving a complete wrench of the mind to an opposite direction. The doctrine of natural rights is plain, simple, commonsensical ; and the practical enjoyment of them requires no tuition, nor any course of adoption. Rights most unjustly have been converted into favors derived from the gratuitous lenity of government, and are now to be purchased as a licence ; when it was solely for their plenary enjoyment that men entered into civil society.—*Magna Charta* need not be taught like the *principia* of Newton, and the rights of personal security,

personal freedom, private property, the right of defending them, and of electing a trustee to watch over and protect them from undefined privilege or unlimited prerogative, require neither literature to feel their value, nor any reach of mind to exercise them with judgment and prudence. In a state of nature we should know them well, and Government has too often been only a means and an art to render and keep us ignorant of fundamental rights and of our primary duties.

What has Isadas done? He has confounded the test with the institution.—He has damped as far as in him lay, the first happy effort to make an union of heads and hearts in this distracted country. He has held out the town of Belfast as a spot of schism and discord, when in reality, there is an evident correspondence of opinion, and he has concluded with an empty wish and an helpless exclamation.

Is Belfast in a state of civil discord? Does every man carry a torch and a mask? Or is it only such papers as these which kindle disunion, and have created that division which they did not find? Does neighbour visit neighbour as usual, or do they toss about at random injurious epithets; and has the union of parties in every other place been, there, converted into a brand of contention? I feel for the honor of a town which always steps forward from the ranks of their countrymen, in the ardor of a good cause and in the courageous spirit of freedom.\* I feel for the social character of a place which

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\* If the people of Belfast are to be denominated Boeotians, I should resemble them to the sacred battalion of that people, which always led the way in the battles of Greece, a band of friends inseparably united, and pledged to each other.—Philip destroyed this cohort; and seeing them stretched on the field of battle, covered with honorable wounds, and lying side by side on the ground where they had been stationed, he wept, and the tears of the tyrant bore a testimony to their virtue and their valor.

has hitherto been like a large family, never known to let religious or political differences excite personal pique or private animosity. I vindicate its unanimity on the Catholic question; and I maintain, that had not the town gone as far as it did, there would not have been merely comparative difference, but positive disunion; not the difference between thus far and still farther; but the opposition between advancing at all, and standing still. There are now but shades of distinction, and all hasten to the same goal with different degrees of celerity; but there might have been a division of the town into three real not two nominal parties, and one of these parties actively inimical to the very cause which is now made a common one: Belfast is therefore as united as ever, and were any ingenious gentleman to say the contrary, and to add, that it is losing its importance in the province by asserting the cause of the nation, or that its care for the happiness of Ireland will hazard its influence at a county election, no inhabitant of Belfast should on this account lose his temper, but should only bow, and say, Sir, you are a stranger.

The United Societies are a discovery in national policy, most auspicious to radical reform, and the horror with which administration views them, is the best proof of their value to Ireland. What the Catholics have obtained from the English Minister, has, I assert, been owing to their formation; and what the Catholics have to obtain, will be accelerated by their continuance. To reject and condemn the whole on account of the restrictions which some of them have adopted, is to reason illogically; and to throw cold water upon this pure and patriotic flame, will only serve, I trust, to make it burn more strongly and more clearly. Men will not hang loosely on society, but unite together; and what is now merely a number, will become a nation.

I have done with this altercation. Plus animi est inferendi periculum quam propulsanti. I shall only repeat, that accord-



ing to the doctrine of Isadas, none could take a test, none could make an oath, but that being who swears by himself and whose counsel is immutable. With respect to inconsistency in the pamphleteer of 1784, the irregularity of motion is apparent, rather than real. It is not in the body moved, but in the eye that perceives it. To a person placed in the frigid and unsocial Saturn, the planets appear now stationary, now progressive, and now retrograde. Yet the motion of the most insignificant among them is simple, regular, uniform, progressive. He sails calm and serene through the pacific ocean of ether, and keeps close to the sun of truth, from which he derives his light and which guides his rotation.

A BÆOTIAN.

March 20, 1792.

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NO. III.

CONCLUSION OF THE  
STRICTURES ON THE TEST OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN.

THE original meaning of the test has been abandoned; and its new sense is not worth an attack or a defence. In the course of repeated distillations its spirit has evaporated. It was at first poisonous—'tis now vapid. This portentous meteor has proved to be nothing more than a Will-with-a-wisp, an innocent display of electrical light; following and alarming those who fly; shrinking from him that would grasp it; and answering no other purpose than to lead men into the mire. The test, then, I leave to its fate; and let the Irish Bards, on their expected meeting at Belfast, sing its requiem,

———— et magna supremum voce ciere,  
Sic o sic positum —————  
———— æterna pace quiescat.

With regard to the concluding paragraphs of the paper signed a Bæotian, let two or three observations suffice.

Previous to 1778, some progress had been made in relief-

ing the Roman Catholics. In that year considerable immunities were granted. From that period till 1784, they were incorporated with the Protestant Volunteers. Yet they continued, in the opinion of Orellana, who wrote in that year, incapable of liberty. But strange to tell! since Parliament suspended its good offices, since the Volunteers in the Roman Catholic provinces laid down their arms, they have, as it were by magic, "acquired an enlargement of mind, and an energy of character, and are as well qualified to exercise the elective franchise, as most of the Protestant forty-shilling free-holders." The fact I am not now disputing. I never thought it the hinge of the controversy. I only note the inconsistency.

Again—though the Catholics continued incapable in 1784, we are assured, that "it is the will to be free that makes the capability; the first sigh that the heart sends forth for liberty is a sufficient indication of potency to enjoy it. The conclusion is, that till 1784, the Catholics had never formed a wish, or sent forth a sigh for liberty. But enough of this. The lion in the net became an object of pity even to the mouse.

Lastly—I am blamed for having insinuated, that a diversity of opinion prevails in Belfast, and blabbed a secret known to 20,000 people. Two hundred and fifty persons, including, with very few exceptions, all the inhabitants, who had ever distinguished themselves by abilities, and patriotic exertion, signed a counter-declaration to a petition, subscribed by six hundred. The first club of United Irishmen, we are now told, differed from both; from the minority, because they voted against them; from the petition for immediate and universal enfranchisement, because they are sworn to forward the means of reform progressively; and if the means be progressive, the end cannot be immediate. Among those who signed the petition, some subscribed it for the sake of unanimity, others on the principle of a sturdy beggar, asking too much in order to obtain something. Lastly, there are many indivi-

duals who do not approve of any further communication of privilege. Notwithstanding all this, I should, it seems, have assured the public, that the town was unanimous; and as I have not done it, my ingenious correspondent steps in, and vindicates the unanimity of Belfast on the Catholic Question.

I despise the quackery of a political empiric. A regular state physician would not disguise the nature of the complaint; but would watch its symptoms and investigate its proximate cause. This he would find to be a morbid secretion, of an inflammatory nature, occasioning an abscess, and threatening a mortification. He would discover, that all the pus and virus of the body politic, instead of being diluted by the milder juices, and circulating innocently through the frame, have been collected into one part, and are likely to induce fever, and indicate dissolution. In other words, that a part of the community have been secluding themselves from the wise and temperate, and, lest they should be disturbed by such intruders, have established a test to exclude every man that would be disposed to enlighten their darkness, or moderate their violence.

I must still insist, that with regard to the Emancipation of the Roman Catholics, my sentiments are not less liberal than those of the United Irishmen. The difference consists in our modes of operation. I would undermine prejudices and antipathies by sap; they would carry them by storm. With respect to their societies, too, I have never wished to impeach their intentions: I have only questioned their wisdom. I never attempted to fix a stain on the principles of any of their members: some of them I hold in the highest estimation, and have been happy in calling my friends. In commencing this controversy, I sacrificed my feelings to a sense of duty; but when once engaged, I determined not to stint my cause. In this line I have persevered, though sensible that the *Esprit de Corps* has an unhappy effect in per-



verting the most amiable minds, clouding the best understanding, and misrepresenting the most innocent expressions.

I too have done with this altercation. I hope neither party will have any *more last words*. And I conclude with the words of a wise man—

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend:

“But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

March 27, 1792.

LEADAS.

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### THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN.

IN the former part of this volume, we have given all those documents which contributed by the strength of their reasoning and the superiority of their eloquence, to disseminate through the north of Ireland the principles of civil and religious freedom. We have seen the most distinguished men of Belfast acting on the principles so strongly recommended by their best and ablest writers. We see the fruits of this action in the cordial union and harmony of all denominations of Irishmen—the Protestant embracing the Catholic—assisting him by his counsel and encouraging him by his spirit.

But the Protestant of Ireland was not merely anxious to promote the emancipation of his Catholic countrymen; he aspired to a higher and more important object—he labored to secure for ever the liberty of all in the reform of the Irish legislature, and to effect this great object so interesting and so necessary, we behold the creation of a society called the *Society of United Irishmen*, bound together by a solemn obligation to procure, by all constitutional and legal means, a reform in the Commons House of Parliament; without which the Catholic and the Protestant would be little more than the slaves of a well paid Irish aristocracy. The shamelessness of parliamentary corruption was notorious. The submission of

the House of Commons to the mandate of the minister, a source of perpetual complaint and intolerable grievance. Nothing, therefore, said the patriots of the North, but a cordial union of all parties, by which the public opinion can be unequivocally conveyed to the government and the legislature, will protect the nation against the worst of despotism,—the despotism of three hundred tyrants leagued together to promote their own aggrandizement on the ruins of the nation.

The greatest enemy which the Society of United Irishmen ever had,\* had the candor to admit, that it was omnipotent in the suppression of all the worst passions of the human heart—the progeny of a long interval of religious and political animosity—of a cruel penal code, which barbarized and brutalized a people whose native disposition was of the kindest and most social character.—The United Irish Society brought men of all descriptions together ; it tore off the mask with which religious bigotry had so long concealed each man's face from his neighbour—it exposed the real enemy, and directed the public mind to the radical cause of all the evils which visited the nation—it united the North and the South, the East and the West in one common bond of affection, and like the principle of Freemasonry, made every Irishman a brother, no matter what his religion or his station. So great and formidable a union commanded a hearing ; the government had therefore two alternatives—to choose either to put down this society by force, or to yield to its wishes by the reformation of the Irish legislature. Desperate as the former alternative was, Mr. Pitt, who was not to be intimidated by the apprehension of an Irish rebellion, embraced it in the sanguine hope, that such a struggle might lead not only to the extinction of the United Irishmen, but to the extinction of the Irish Legislature, and the annihilation of Irish Independence. Having taken this reso-

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\* Lord Clare.

lation, he cared not how many ingredients he threw into the cup to accelerate the national fury.—He set the Catholic against the Protestant, and the Protestant against the Catholic. He held out hopes to the latter, merely to blast them, and promised unlimited ascendancy to the Protestant, in order to exasperate the Catholic. In this desperate crisis, the Society of United Irishmen departed from their original purpose, and merged into the views of the common enemy. It became, in the hands of the ambitious, a powerful engine of annoyance, and, were it not for the occurrence of those misfortunes which no human foresight can effectually guard against, the Minister of England might have had to repent of his determination to drive Ireland into rebellion. Fortune, however, favored Mr. Pitt in the struggle, and the result has been the annihilation of Ireland's national independence. The following are some of the ablest appeals made by the Society of United Irishmen to their fellow-countrymen.—

*September 14th, 1793.*

## SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN.

### *THE HON. SIMON BUTLER IN THE CHAIR.*

THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS WAS UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO FROM THIS  
SOCIETY

TO THE NATION.

WE observe with concern and indignation the insidious means employed to stifle the Catholic voice in its humble representation of the grievances which afflict the people, and of the remedy specified to redress them. We lament that men of any pretensions to common sense and public spirit should have been blindly seduced into the publication of the most flagrant absurdities, calumnies, and libels, against the most oppressed, patient, and numerous description of our fellow-citizens. That such publications should have issued from the



grand-jury-room cannot be matter of surprize. Since the nomination of Sheriffs has been transferred from the People to the Crown, grand juries, which are returnable by these officers, have lost their original character of independence, and are now notoriously subordinate to aristocratic intrigue and ministerial corruption. As therefore these ancient bodies, which should be the sacred organs of truth as well as the guardians of the constitution, have in this instance degenerated into instruments of prejudice and civil dissention, we feel it a duty which we owe to public justice as well as to our country, to appeal from the unjust sentence of a few influenced men to the tribunal of a rational nation.

It appears that a small dispersed number of individuals of the Catholic persuasion, without authority from the body at large, were, in the course of last session, cajoled into the measure of presenting an eleemosynary address to government, and this was craftily made the vehicle of some obscure and ill-founded censure upon the constitutional conduct of the Catholic Committee. The embarrassment occasioned by this stale artifice determined the committee to obtain an unequivocal expression of the Catholic sentiment; and with this view they printed, published, and circulated throughout Ireland several thousand copies of a letter submitting to the Catholic people a plan for electing delegates to the general committee: a plan at once the most simple, orderly, and the best calculated for framing an unquestionable organ of public opinion. The letter solicits the attendance of delegates appointed for the express purpose and with the express instruction of imploring and supplicating from the legislature and the Sovereign a participation in the elective franchise and the benefit of the trial by jury. It is worthy of remark, that this letter is utterly silent upon the ground of constitutional right, and never states this application as intended to be made upon any other principle than as a necessary means of securing to the

Catholics an equal access to leasehold property and a fair distribution of justice. Upon this proceeding, so simple, and so obviously conformable to the fundamental principles of law and constitution, pettifogging chicane, sitting in council with bigotry and nonsense, having 'ingeniously' discovered that the letter was circulated with great secrecy, pronounces the publication to be of a most dangerous, seditious, and inflammatory tendency—the phantom of a Popish congress is raised—the scare-crow image of a French national assembly is conjured up—the vision of a gun-powder plot appears—and the suppliant committee of an enslaved people is identified with sovereign legislative bodies.

We say 'enslaved,' for it will not be denied that a people are enslaved, who being excluded from all share in the Legislature of their country, are nevertheless subject to laws and taxes imposed on them without their consent. "Law to bind all must be assented to by all." It is not in a system of extirpation by penal laws, it is in the free agency of the people that we are to seek for the true and permanent principle of a free and prosperous government. The man who says that a political constitution can be upheld by penal laws, may say that the human constitution can be nourished by the use of slow poison.

Where so small a portion of so large a mass exercises the elective franchise, and a decided majority of that small portion forms the notorious property of a venal aristocracy, we consider the elective body of the people as nothing more than the semblance of a larger species of corporation. Hence, that political ignorance, that selfish spirit of monopoly, that jealous hostility to the general happiness, which must ever characterize these avaricious retailers of freedom, have also infected a great number of the elective body of the nation.

Hirelings, whom we have at all prices, cry out, that the Catholics prefer their complaints in a style of demand. Such

language could not have been uttered in a free land ; it is the insolent dictation of despotism ; its authors may wish for fellow-slaves, but we wish for fellow-citizens. The Catholics have ever addressed the Legislature with due respect ; their submissive conduct is unquestionable ; but in our mind they only show themselves worthy of their rights, when they reclaim them.

Is it meant to deny them the right of petitioning?—To question their right of meeting peaceably for that purpose amounts to such a denial. This would be a false as well as a most mischievous doctrine ; for it would necessarily throw the subject upon the alternative of violence. He must either suffer or resist ; and of course he must silently sink under despotism, or break out into anarchy. When the innocent are punished by law, the severity of negro-servitude alone could preclude them from the right of petitioning.

If the charges made against the Catholic Committee were founded in truth, grand juries, under the obligations of their oath and public station, should have presented them—if false, then have grand juries been guilty of defamatory libels.

What security do we require of our Catholic brethren?—Political mistrust has not yet devised a test, which they have not cheerfully taken. They disclaim all those abominable principles inconsistent with good government which have been falsely imputed to them by those whose monopoly was sustained by the divisions of their country. They avow their support of the church establishment. They are even willing to worship that new-born chimera,—“The Protestant Ascendancy,” provided the jealous idol may be appeased without the sacrifice of the elective franchise and the trial by jury. Popery is no longer to be met with but in the statute-book. The Catholics stand before us as political Protestants, for they protest against the errors of the state, and endeavor to establish the reformation of the constitution.



Will the men who suborn this upstart zeal for the integrity of the constitution, submit their labors for its preservation during some years past to a candid and critical examination? Short is the catalogue of their services—what has signalized their political career? What, but an uniform exertion to stifle all efforts for the establishment of Irish freedom? Indignant at the odious review, and the treacherous consistency of their present conduct, we gladly turn away to acknowledge with pride, that the virtuous founder of the Revolution of 1782 is also the leader in the great patriotic work of this day.

As for our part, associated for the attainment of universal emancipation and representative legislature, we cannot separate our duty to our country from our duty to our countrymen. The grievances they suffer are the grievances of the nation; the relief they solicit is the relief of the nation; and as the only true policy of states as well as of individuals is Justice, we cherish the grateful hope, that the rising spirit of union in a liberal age is the harbinger of its triumph.

Signed by order,

THOMAS WRIGHT, *SEC.*

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#### UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN.

##### *THE HON. SIMON BUTLER IN THE CHAIR.*

THE Society of United Irishmen in Dublin, address the Friends of the People at London. Impressed with the resemblance in the title, nature and destination of their respective institutions; and acting under that fraternity of feeling, which such a coincidence naturally inspires—the title which you bear is a glorious one, and we too are Friends of the People. If we be asked, “who are the people?” we turn not our eyes here and there, to this party, or to that persuasion, and cry, “Lo! the people;” but we look around us without partiality or predilection, and we answer, the multitude of human beings, the living mass of humanity associated to exist,

to subsist, and to be happy. In them and them only, we find the original of social authority, the measure of political value, and the pedestal of legitimate power.

As friends of the people, upholding their rights, and deploring their sufferings, the great object of this society is a real representation of the Irish nation in an Irish parliament; and as friends of the whole people, we support the necessity of Catholic emancipation as a means of making representation what it ought to be, free, equal, and entire. If the people of one country be not obliged to obey the laws of another, on the same principle when the people resident in a country, have no sort of influence over the legislature, that legislature will receive rather a discretionary acquiescence than legitimate obedience; and as this discretionary state is dangerous, because precarious, a change becomes necessary for the peace and happiness of the nation, violence being the last measure to which rational beings will resort.

The present state of Ireland with regard to population is upwards of four millions, three of which are of the Catholic religion; and with regard to political freedom,—

1. The state of Protestant representation is as follows: 17 boroughs have no resident elector; 16 have but one; 16 have from 2 to 5; 90 have 13 electors each; 90 persons return for 106 venal boroughs, that is 212 members out of 300, the whole number. 54 members are returned by five noblemen and four bishops, and borough influence has given landlords such power in the counties as makes them boroughs also—53 peers nominate 124 members, and influence 10, so that 228 are returned by 105 individuals, leaving only 72 out of 300 to the free election of the people. One lord who nominates 4 members, is not a peer of Ireland, and eleven lords who are Irish peers, are absentees, and spend their fortunes out of the realm; to the representation of which they send their commands and are obeyed, notwithstanding two solemn votes

of the Commons against this high infringement of their liberties and privileges. In short, representation, which in its nature is only a deposit, has been converted into a property, and that constitution which is founded on equal liberty, and which declares that no tax shall be levied without the 'good will' of the people, is totally perverted in its principles, and corrupted in its practice; yet the majesty of the people is still quoted with affected veneration; and if the crown be ostensibly placed on a part of the Protestant portion, it is placed in mockery, for it is encircled with thorns.

2. With regard to the Catholics, the following is the simple and sorrowful fact:—Three millions, every one of whom has an interest in the state, and collectively give it its value, are taxed without being represented, and bound by laws to which they have not given consent. They now require a share of political liberty, in the participation of the elective franchise, and of civil liberty in the privilege of serving on grand juries. There can be no civil without political liberty, and in requiring the right of suffrage they in reality demand only a safeguard for their religion, their property and their lives.

The code of penal laws against the Catholics reduced oppression into a system. The action and pressure of this system continually accumulating without any re-action on the part of the sufferers, sunk in the lethargy of servitude, have confirmed the governing portion of the people in a habit of domination. This habit, mixing with the antipathies of past times, and the irritations of the moment, has impressed a strange persuasion that the rights of the plurality are Protestant property, and that the birth-right of millions, born and to be born, continue the spoils of war and booty of conquest. The perversion of the understanding perverts the heart, and this Protestant ascendancy, as it calls itself, uniting power with passion, and hating the Catholics because it has injured them,



on a bare inquisitorial suspicion, insufficient to criminate an individual, would erase a whole people from the roll of citizenship, and for the sins (if they were sins) of remote ancestors would attain their remotest posterity. We have read, and read with horror, that Louis XI. ordered the children to be placed under the scaffold where the father was beheaded, that they might be sprinkled with his blood.

Is it, we think, by this unequal distribution of popular privilege, that its very nature has, in this kingdom, been corrupted, and from the moment that equality of rights was overturned, and general liberty became particular power, the public mind has been split into a conflict of factions. General distribution of the elective franchise would make corruption impracticable, but when common right becomes the property of person, party, or persuasion, it acquires a value equally unnatural and unconstitutional; is bought and sold; rises and falls like any marketable commodity. The deprivation of the elective franchise, on the one hand, robs a great majority of the nation of an invaluable blessing; and its accumulation in the hands of the Protestant portion, operates on that very portion as a curse. The right of all, heaped up and hoarded by the few, becomes a public pest, and the nutriment of the constitution is changed into its poison. The iniquitous monopoly rots in boroughs; spreads its contagion through counties; taints morals and manners; makes elections mere fairs for the traffic of franchise and the sale of men; in place of that nationality of mind which spreads its parental embrace around a whole people, substitutes the envious, excluding spirit of selfish corporations; and swelling, at length, into monstrous and gigantic ascendancy, holds forth a hundred thousand hands to bribe and betray, and tramples with a hundred thousand feet on those miserable millions who have lost their only guarantee against injustice and oppression.

Instructed by the genius of the constitution, and the genuine spirit of the laws ; instructed, of late, by all that has been spoken, or written, or acted, or suffered in the cause of freedom ; instructed by the late revolution in America, by the late revolution in Ireland, by the late revolution in France ; hearing of all that has been done over the face of the globe for Liberty, and feeling all that can be suffered from the want of it ; reading the charter of independence to Ireland, and listening to the spirit-stirring voice of her great deliverer ; actuated, in fine, by that imperishable spark in the bosom of man which the servitude of a century may smother, but cannot extinguish, the Catholics of this country have been lessoned into liberty, have learned to know their rights, to be sensible of their wrongs, and to detail by peaceable delegation, their grievances, rather than endure without obedience. You !—in either kingdoms, who reproach the Catholics of Ireland for asserting the rights of nature, burn your books, tear your charters, break down your free press, and crumble to pieces those moulds which have cast liberty in so fair a form, as to make Catholics feel what Protestants have felt, and join their admiration and love with those of a worshipping world.

This society and many other societies have associated to create that union of power, and that brotherhood of affection among all the inhabitants of this island, which is the interest as well as duty of all. We are all Irishmen, and our object is to unite the different descriptions of religion in the cause of our common country. From the most opposite points in the wide circumference of religion we tend with increasing velocity to the same centre of political union. A reform in parliament preceding Catholic enfranchisement would be in its nature partial and exclusive, and unless a reform immediately follows that emancipation (which it will certainly do) the extension of elective franchise, would only add to the mass of corruption. The centre of our union is fixed and immoveable.

The Presbyterian wishes for national freedom.—The Catholic aspires to nothing more ; nor can either of them be brought to believe that those varieties of religious faith, which may be deemed the pleasures of the Creator, should be made the engines of political torture to any of his creatures. Too long have our people been set in array of battle against each other ; too long have the rancor and revenge of our ancestors been left as a legacy of blood to their posterity ; too long has one limb of the social body been tied down, until it had nearly lost all feeling, life and energy. It is our wish, it is our hope, to give Ireland the full and free possession of both her arms, her Catholic arm as well as her Protestant arm, that she may the better embrace her friends or grapple with her foes.

Such are the principles and practice of our institution, which having neither power nor patronage, but merely the energy of honesty, has not only been distinguished by the calumnies of those who are born only to bite the heel, and be crushed under foot, but has been honored by the obloquy of men who fill the first offices in the state. From them we appeal to natural right, and eternal justice, which ought ever to be established without compromise or reservation. From them we appeal to those who call themselves friends of the people. Look not upon Ireland with an eye of indifference. The period of Irish insignificance is passing fast away. If the nation ever appeared contemptible, it was because the nation did not act ; but no sooner in the late war was it abandoned by Government, than it rose to distinction as a people. As to any union between the islands, believe us when we assert, that our union rests upon our mutual independence. We shall love each other, if we be left to ourselves. It is the union of minds that ought to bind these nations together. Reciprocal interests and mutual wants will ever secure mutual affection ; but were any other union to be forced, and force only could effect it, you would endanger your liberties, and we should lose our rights ;



you would feel the influence of the crown increase beyond all sufferance, and we should lose the name and energies of a people, with every hope of raising to its merited station in the map of mankind this noble and neglected island "for which God has done so *much* and Man so *little*."

Signed by Order,

THOMAS WRIGHT, *sec.*

*Dublin, October 26th, 1792.*

*November 23, 1792.*

ADDRESS FROM THE  
SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN IN DUBLIN,  
TO THE  
DELEGATES FOR PROMOTING A REFORM  
IN SCOTLAND.

WILLIAM DRENNAN, CHAIRMAN.  
ARCHIBALD HAMILTON ROWAN, *SEC.*

WE take the liberty of addressing you, in the spirit of civil union, in the fellowship of a just and a common cause. We greatly rejoice that the spirit of freedom moves over the face of Scotland; that light seems to break from the chaos of her internal government; and that a country so respectable for her attainments in science, in arts, and in arms; for men of literary eminence; for the intelligence and morality of her people, now acts from a conviction of the union between virtue, letters and liberty; and, now rises to distinction, not by a calm, contented, secret wish for a reform in parliament, but by openly, actively, and urgently willing it, with the unity and energy of an embodied nation. We rejoice that you do not consider yourselves as merged and melted down into another country, but that in this great national question, you are still—Scotland—the land where Buchanan wrote, and Fletcher spoke, and Wallace fought.

Away from us and from our children those puerile antipathies so unworthy of the manhood of nations, which insulate

individuals as well as countries, and drive the citizen back to the savage. We esteem and we respect you. We pay merited honor to a nation in general well educated, and well informed, because we know that the ignorance of the people is the cause and effect of all civil and religious despotism. We honor a nation regular in their lives, and strict in their manners, because we conceive private morality to be the only secure foundation of public policy. We honor a nation eminent for men of genius, and we trust, that they will now exert themselves not so much in perusing and penning the histories of other countries, as in making their own a subject for the historian. May we venture to observe to them that mankind have been too retrospective—canonized antiquity, and undervalued themselves. Man has reposed on ruins, and rested his head on some fragments of the temple of liberty, or at most amused himself in pacing the measurement of the edifice, and nicely limiting its proportions; not reflecting that this temple is truly Catholic, the ample earth its area, and the arch of heaven, its dome.

We will lay open to you our hearts. Our cause is your cause—If there is to be a struggle between us, let it be which nation shall be foremost in the race of mind: let this be the noble animosity kindled between us, who shall first attain that free constitution from which both are equidistant; who shall first be the saviour of the empire.

The sense of both countries with respect to the intolerable abuses of the constitution has been clearly manifested, and proves that our political situations are not dissimilar; that our rights and wrongs are the same. Out of 32 counties in Ireland, 29 petitioned for a reform in parliament; and out of 56 of the royal burghs in Scotland, 50 petitioned for a reform in their internal structure and government. If we be rightly informed, there is no such thing as popular election in Scotland. The people who ought to possess that weight in the

political scale, which might bind them to the soil, and make them cling to the constitution, are now as dust in the balance, blown abroad by the least impulse, and scattered through other countries, merely because they hang so loosely to their own. They have no share in the national *Firm*, and are ag-grieved not only by irregular and illegal exaction of taxes; by misrule and mismanagement of corporations; by misconduct of self-elected and irresponsible magistrates; by waste of public property; and by want of competent judicatures; but, in our opinion, most of all, by an inadequate parliamentary representation—for we assert, that 45 commoners and 16 peers are a pitiful representation for two millions and a half of people; particularly as your commoners consider themselves not as the representatives of that people, but of the councils of the boroughs by whom they are elected.

Exclusive charters in favor of boroughs, monopolize the general rights of the people, and that act must be absurd which precludes all other towns from the power of being restored to their ancient freedom.

We remember that heretable jurisdictions and feudal privileges, though expressly reserved by the act of union (20th art.) were set aside by Act of Parliament in 1746, and we think that there is much stronger ground at present, for restoring to the mass of the people their alienated rights, and to the constitution its spirit and its integrity.

Look now, we pray you, upon Ireland. Long was this unfortunate island the prey of prejudiced factions and ferocious parties. The rights or rather duties of conquest were dreadfully abused, and the Catholic religion was made the perpetual pretext for subjecting the state by annihilating the citizen, and destroying not the religious persuasion but the man; not popery but the people. It was not till very lately that the part of the nation which is truly colonial, reflected that though their ancestors had been victorious, they themselves



were now included in the general subjection; subduing only to be subdued, and trampled upon by Britain as a servile dependency. When, therefore, the Protestants began to suffer what the Catholics had suffered and were suffering; when from serving as the instruments, they were made themselves the objects of foreign domination, then they became conscious they had a country; and then they felt—an Ireland. They resisted British dominion, renounced colonial subserviency, and following the example of a Catholic parliament just a century before, they asserted the exclusive jurisdiction and legislative competency of this island. A sudden light from America shone through our prison. Our volunteers arose. The chains fell from our hands. We followed Grattan, the angel of our deliverance, and in 1782 Ireland ceased to be a province and became a nation. But, with reason, should we despise and renounce this Revolution as merely a transient burst through a bad habit; the sudden grasp of necessity in despair, from tyranny in distress, did we not believe that the revolution is still in train; that it is less the single and shining act of 82, than a series of national improvements which that act ushers in and announces; that it is only the herald of liberty and glory, of Catholic emancipation, as well as Protestant independence; that in short this revolution indicates new principles, foreruns new practice, and lays a foundation for advancing the whole people higher in the scale of being, and diffusing equal and permanent happiness.

British supremacy changed its aspect, but its essence remained the same. First it was force, and on the event of the late revolution, it became influence; direct hostility shifted into systematic corruption, silently drawing off the virtue and vigor of the island, without shock or explosion. Corruption, that glides into every place, tempts every person, taints every principle, infects the political mind through all its relations and dependencies; so regardless of public character as to set

the highest honors to sale, and to purchase boroughs with the price of such prostitution; so regardless of private morality, as to legalize the licentiousness of the lowest and most pernicious gambling, and to extract a calamitous revenue from the infatuation and intoxication of the people.

The Protestants of Ireland were now sensible that nothing could counteract this plan of debilitating policy, but a radical reform in the house of the people, and that without such reform, the revolution itself was nominal and delusive. The wheel merely turned round, but it did not move forward, and they were as distant as ever from the goal. They resolved.—They convened.—They met with arms.—They met without them.—They petitioned.—But all in vain; for they were but a portion of the people. Then they looked around, and beheld their Catholic countrymen. Three millions—we repeat it—three millions taxed without being represented, bound by laws to which they had not given consent, and politically dead in their native land. The apathy of the Catholic mind changed into sympathy, and that begot an energy of sentiment and action. They had eyes, and they read. They had ears, and they listened. They had hearts, and they felt. They said—“Give us our rights as you value your own. Give us a share of civil and political liberty, the elective franchise, and the trial by jury. Treat us as men, and we shall treat you as brothers. Is taxation without representation a grievance to three millions across the Atlantic, and no grievance to three millions at your doors? Throw down that pale of persecution which still keeps up civil war in Ireland, and make us one people. We shall then stand, supporting and supported, in the assertion of that liberty which is due to all, and which all should unite to attain.”

It was just—and immediately a principle of adhesion took place for the first time, among the inhabitants of Ireland. All religious persuasions found in a political union their com-

mon duty and their common salvation. In this society, and its affiliated societies, the Catholic and the Presbyterian are at this instant holding out their hands and opening their hearts to each other, agreeing in principles, concurring in practice. We unite for immediate, ample, and substantial justice to the Catholics, and when that is attained, a combined exertion for a reform in parliament is the condition of our compact, and the seal of our communion.

British supremacy takes alarm. The haughty monopolists of national power and common right, who crouch abroad, to domineer at home, now look with more surprise and less contempt on this 'besotted' people. A new artifice is adopted, and that restless domination which at first ruled as open war, by the length of the sword; then, as covert corruption, by the strength of the poison; now assumes the style and title of Protestant Ascendancy; calls down the name of religion from heaven to sow discord on earth: to rule by anarchy; to keep up distrust and antipathy among parties, among persuasions, among families, nay, to make the passions of the individuals struggle, like Cain and Abel, in the very home of the heart, and to convert every little paltry necessity that accident, indolence, or extravagance, bring upon a man, into a pander for the purchase of his honesty and the murder of his reputation.

We will not be the dupes of such ignoble artifices. We see this scheme of strengthening political persecution and state inquisition, by a fresh infusion of religious fanaticism—but we will unite, and we will be free. *Universal emancipation with representative legislature* is the polar principle which guides our society, and shall guide it through all the tumult of factions and fluctuations of parties. It is not upon a coalition of opposition with ministry that we depend, but upon a coalition of Irishmen with Irishmen, and in that coalition *alone* we find an object worthy of reform, and at the same time the strength and sinew both to attain and secure it. It



We have encountered much calumny. We have, among a thousand contradictory epithets been called republicans and levellers, as if by artfully making the terms appear synonymous, their nature could be made the same ; as if a republican were a leveller, or a leveller a republican ; as if the only leveller was not the despot who crushes with an iron sceptre every rank and degree of society into one ; as if republican or democratic energy was not, as well as aristocratical privilege, or regal prerogative, sanctioned by the fundamental principles of the constitution, by all those memorable precedents which form its first features, and by which the just and virtuous struggles of our ancestors, recognized by successive generations, point out to their posterity when they ought to interpose, and how long they ought to suffer. In his words, whose name rests unknown, but whose fame is immortal, (Junius), we desire “ that the constitution may preserve its monarchical form, but we would have the manners of the people purely and strictly republican.” Are you not sensible that this cry of republicanism, as the clamour against Catholic delegation, has been raised and prolonged by the mischievous malignity of the lower gossips of government, merely to drown the general voice for reform, like the state manœuvre which ordered a flourish of trumpets, and alarum of drums, at the side of suffering patriots, when they wished to address themselves to the reason and justice of the people.—But we will speak and you will hear.—Yes, countrymen, we do desire that extended liberty which may allow you, as citizens, to do what you will, provided you do not injure another, or rather to do all the good you can to others, without doing injustice to yourselves. Yes, countrymen, we do wish for an equality of rights which is constitutional, not an equality of property which is impossible. Yes, countrymen, we do long for another equality, and we hope yet to see it realized : an equality consisting in the power of every father of a family to acquire

by labor either of mind or body, something beyond a mere subsistence, some little capital to prove, in case of sickness, old age, or misfortune, a safeguard for his body and for his soul, a hallowed hoard that may lift him above the hard necessity which struggles between conscience and corruption; that may keep his heart whole and his spirit erect, while his body bends beneath its burden; make him fling away the wages of venality, and proudly return to an humble home, where a constitution that looks alike on the palace and the hovel, may stand at his hearth a tutelar divinity, and spread the Egis of equal law to guard him from the revenge of those who offered the bribe and offered it in vain. Yes, Irishmen, we do proclaim it our dearest wish, to see a more equal distribution of the benefits and blessings of life through the lowest classes of the community, the stamina of society; and we assert it as our firm belief, that an equal distribution of the elective franchise must contribute to this end; for national happiness depends upon employment, which must itself spring from industry; and that again depends on liberty, security of person and property, equal law, speedy and impartial justice, and, in short, on that tenure in the state, which may raise the community in relative value as in self-estimation; make the agency of the people instrumental to a good government, and the re-agency of good government meliorate the morals and manners of the people; bind together the distinct, and hitherto contending classes of society, by the cement of reciprocity and the interchange of obligations, and make the higher ranks, balustrades that adorn the arch, feel their dependence on the people, who are the piles that support it. On the whole, we are so far republicans, as to desire a national House of Commons, in its origin, its form, its features, and its spirit; reverencing the people, not conspiring, with every other rank, against them, against their privileges, their pleasures, their homely happiness, their fireside enjoyment; but rather cher-

ishing the elective franchise, the poor man's ewe lamb, and stigmatizing the landlord, who would despoil him of it, as a traitor to the constitution, a robber of national right, and a murderer of public happiness.

We have addressed the Friends of the People in England, and have received their concurrence, their thanks, and their gratulation. We have addressed the volunteers,—deliverers of this injured land!—Have we done wrong? If we have, tear your colors from the staff—reverse your arms—muffle your drums—beat a funeral march for Ireland—and then abandon the corpse to fencibles, to militia, to invalids, and dismounted dragoons. If we have not done wrong, and we swear by the revolution of 82 that we have not,—go on with the zeal of enterprizing virtue, and a sense of your own importance, to exercise that right of self-defence, which belongs to the nation, and to infuse constitutional energy into the public will, for the public good.

We now address Ireland.—We address you as a moral person, having a conscience, a will, and an understanding; bound not only to preserve, but to perfect your nature; the nations around you to witness your conduct, and a God above you to reward your virtues, or to punish your crimes. We speak to you as man to man,—reading your countenance, remarking the various passions that now shift across it, and striving to recollect a character long obliterated by foreign influence, or, after short and fierce developements, becoming the same dull blank as before. Severed as you have always been into counteracting interests; an English interest, an aristocratic interest, a Protestant interest, and a Catholic interest,—all contradistinguished from commonweal; and all, like the four elements, before wisdom moved on the surface of the deep, exerting their respective influences to retain a chaos rather than create a constitution; actuated, as you have most generally been, by circumstances merely *external*,—compressed at one time into



fortuitous union by the iron circle of British domination,—at another time, by the panic of invasion and fear of famine, when a bankrupt merchantry and embarrassed gentry, were starved into the common cause of a beggared people, whom government had first pillaged, and then abandoned;—at the present time, perhaps impelled chiefly by the extraordinary events that have taken place on the Continent, it is not surprising that your real character is still, in a great measure, unknown to Europe, to Britain, and even to yourself. It is not surprising, that recollecting the past, we should be anxious about the future;—that we will not entirely confide in the fugitive splendor of the moment, the passing spirit of the people, or even the miraculous conversion of parliament;—never, never satisfied or secure, until we see a real representation of that people in that parliament;—until we can see Britain and Ireland connected by constitution, not by corruption,—by equal, not by strong government;—until we see public opinion, or the will of the nation, not as now, acting with rude and intermittent shocks, but the settled and central balance of the political order, around which, without apparent motion in itself, the different branches of the legislature may revolve with the silence and regularity of the planetary system.

We address your understanding,—the common sense of the commonweal, and we ask you, is it not a truth, that where the people do not participate in the legislature, by a delegation of representatives, freely, fairly, and frequently elected, there can be no public liberty; Is it not the fact, that in this country there is no representative legislature; because the people are not represented in the legislature, and have no partnership in the constitution? If it be the principle of the constitution, that it is the right of every commoner in this realm to have a vote in the election of his representative; and that without such vote, no man can be actually represented, it is our wish, in that case, to renovate that constitution, and to re-

is not upon external circumstances, upon the pledge of man or minister we depend, but upon the internal energy of the Irish Nation. We will not buy or borrow liberty from America or from France, but manufacture it ourselves, and work it up with those materials which the hearts of Irishmen furnish them with at home. We do not worship the British, far less the Irish Constitution, as sent down from heaven, but we consider it as human workmanship, which man has made, and man can mend. An unalterable constitution, whatever be its name, must be despotism. It is not the constitution, but the people, which ought to be inviolable, and it is time to recognize and renovate the rights of the English, the Scotch, and the Irish nations.—Rights, which can neither be bought nor sold, granted by charter, or forestalled by monopoly, but which nature dictates as the birthright of all, and which it is the business of a constitution to define, to enforce, and to establish. If government has a sincere regard for the safety of the constitution, let them coincide with the people in the speedy reform of its abuses, and not by an obstinate adherence to them, drive that people into republicanism.

We have told you what our situation was, what it is, what it ought to be: our end, a national legislature; our means, an union of the whole people. Let this union extend throughout the empire. Let all unite for all, or each man suffer for all. In each country let the people assemble in peaceful and constitutional convention. Let delegates from each country digest a plan of reform, best adapted to the situation and circumstances of their respective nations, and let the legislatures be petitioned at once by the urgent and unanimous voice of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

You have our ideas. Answer us, and that quickly. This is not a time to procrastinate. Your illustrious Fletcher has said, that the liberties of a people are not to be secured, without passing through great difficulties, and no toil or labors

ought to be declined to preserve a nation from slavery. He spoke well ; and we add, that it is incumbent on every nation who adventures into a conflict for freedom, to remember it is on the event, however absurdly, depends the estimation of public opinion ; honor and immortality, if fortunate ; if otherwise, infamy and oblivion. Let this check the rashness that rushes unadvisedly into the committal of national character, or if that be already made, let the same consideration impel us all to advance with active not passive perseverance, with manly confidence and calm determination, smiling with equal scorn at the bluster of official arrogance, and the whisper of private malevolence, until we have planted the flag of Freedom on the summit, and are at once victorious and secure.

*January 25, 1793.*

THE SOCIETY OF  
UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN,  
TO THE IRISH NATION.

WILLIAM DRENNAN, CHAIRMAN.  
ARCHIBALD HAMILTON ROWAN, SEC.

IT is our right and our duty, at this time and at all times, to communicate our opinion to the public, whatever may be its success ; and under the protection of a free-press, itself protected by a jury, judges of law as well as fact, we will never be afraid to speak freely what we freely think, appealing for the purity of our intentions to God, and as far as these intentions are manifested by word, writing, or action, appealing to the justice of our cause, and the judgment of our country.

On the 9th of November, 1791, was this society founded. We and our beloved brethren of Belfast, first began that civic union, which, if a nation be a society united for mutual advantage, has made Ireland a nation ; and at a time when all wished, many willed, but few spoke, and fewer acted, we,



Catholics and Protestants, joined our hands and our hearts together ; sunk every distinctive appellation in the name *Irishman* ; and in the presence of God, devoted ourselves to universal enfranchisement, and a real representation of all the people in parliament. On this rock of right our little ark found a resting-place ; gradually, though not slowly, throughout the country, other stations of safety appeared, and what before was agitated sea, became firm and fertile land. From that time have the body and spirit of our Societies increased, until selfish Corporations, sunk in conscious insignificance, have given way to a grand incorporation of the Irish People.

We have, in our digest of the penal laws, addressed ourselves successfully, to the good sense, humanity, and generous indignation of all Ireland, convincing public reason, alarming public conscience, and holding up this collection of bloody fragments as a terrible memorial of government without justice, and of legality without constitution. It has been our rule and our practice never to enter into compromise or composition with a noxious principle, and we have therefore set our face, and lifted our voice, against this persecuting and pusillanimous code, as against the murderer of our brother, eager to erase the whole of it from the statute-book, as it erased our countrymen from the state, and wishing to proscribe such an incongruous and monstrous conjunction of terms as Penal laws not only from a digest of the laws but from the dictionary of the language.

It has appeared our duty, in times such as these, when the head is nothing without the heart, and with men such as we oppose, not only to write and speak, but to act and suffer ; to reckon nothing hazardous, provided it was necessary ; to come forward with the intrepidity which a good cause inspires, and a backward people required ; by going far ourselves to make others follow faster, though, all the time conjuring us to re-

treat ; in short, to make the retrograde stationary, and the stationary progressive ; to quicken the dead, and add a soul to the living.

Knowing that what the tongue is to the man, the press is to the people, though nearly blasted in our cradle by the sorcery of solicitors of law, and general attorneys, we have persisted with courageous perseverance to rally round this forlorn hope of freedom, and to maintain this citadel of the constitution, at the risque of personal security, property, and all that was dear to us. They have come to us, with a writ and a warrant, and an *ex officio* information, but we have come to them in the name of the genius of the British constitution and the majesty of the people of Ireland. Is sedition against the officers of administration, to exercise the criminal jurisdiction of the country, and is sedition against the people, to walk by with arrogant impunity ?

We have defended the violated liberty of the subject against the undefined and voracious privilege of the House of Commons, treating with merited scorn the insolent menaces of men inflated with office, and not only have we maintained the rights of the people at the bar of this branch of the legislature, but we have, at the bench of judicature, vindicated the right of the nation, its real independence and supremacy ; demonstrating that general inviolability was made transmissible to one or many deputies, to the utter extinction of responsibility, the evasion of criminality ; and that the executive power of imperial and independent Ireland, was merely a jingling appendage to the great Seal of Great Britain. Not a man so low, that, if oppressed by an assumption of power, civil or military, has not met with our counsel, our purse and our protection : not a man so high, that if acting contrary to popular right or public independence, we have not denounced at the judgment seat of justice, and at the equitable tribunal of public opinion.

vive its suspended animation, by giving free motion and full play to its vital principle. If, on the other hand, the constitution does not fully provide for an impartial and adequate representation of all the people ; if it be more exclusive than inclusive in its nature ; if it be a monopoly, a privilege, or a prerogative ; in that case is our desire to alter it ; for what is the constitution to us, if we are as nothing to the constitution ? Is the constitution made for you, or you for it ? If the people do not constitute a part of it, what is it to them more than the ghost of Alfred ; and what are principles without practice which they hear and read, to practice without principles which they see and feel ?

The people of Ireland want political power :—taxation without consent, and legislation without representation, is not a partial grievance, or a Catholic grievance, but the grievance of the nation. The elective franchise is withheld from all, while all want a constituency in the constitution. The disfranchised, and the unfranchised, the unrepresented, and the misrepresented, the Catholic and the Presbyterian, are equally under the law, and out of the constitution : the Protestant, who is supposed to have it, and the Catholic who wishes to have it, are equally interested in having it free ; for the truth is, that the whole community wants that emancipation which is necessary to a free government ; we can give no truer definition of slavery, than that state in which men are governed without their consent, and no better description of freedom, than that not only those who make the law, should be bound by the law, but those who are bound by the law should have a share in the making it.

All Ireland knows and feels that the people are ousted from their own constitution, and that in a government where they have no participation, the King must become a despot, and the nation a slave. Public reason is convinced, and we assert with the confidence of conviction, that there are not 100



in this island, inimical to a renovation of the genuine constitution, who are not, at the same time, personally interested in the continuance of its corruptions and the prolongation of its abuses. The time is come when the nation must speak for the nation, and the long expected hour of redemption approaches, perhaps providentially protracted, until the universal voice could be heard, and the universal will declared. The nation is *one*; one in body, one in soul, an union of colors in a single ray of truth; and the same inextinguishable principle which has accomplished many bloodless revolutions in our history; the peaceful revolution of 79, which gained a free trade, the peaceful revolution of 82, which gained an independence of right to Ireland; will consummate her imperfect freedom, with equal safety, honor and tranquillity, by the same means, a constitutional interposition of the people, justifiable by law, reason, right, and expediency. The honor of Ireland, her dearest interests, present and future, the interest of her land-holders, and of her merchants, her commercial credit, her staple manufacture, are all involved in the present crisis, and urgently call upon you to declare in convention, your wish, your will, and your determination; that the House of Commons may be restored to that true representative character which would regain national confidence, most effectually suppress all particular associations, give vigor to government, and rest to the perturbed spirit of the people.

O, Ireland! Ireland! country to which we have clung in all our misfortunes, personal, religious, political; for whose freedom and happiness we are here solemnly united; for whom, as a society we live; and for whom as men, if hard necessity commands it, we are ready to die; let us conjure you not to abuse the present precious moment, by a self-extinguishment, by a credulous committal of your judgment and senses to the direction of others, by an idle and ideot gaze

on what may be going on in parliament. In receiving good offices from all, distinguish between sound Hibernicism and that windy patriotism, which is now puffing and blowing in the race of popularity. Trust as little to your friends as to your enemies in a matter where you can act only by yourselves. The will of the nation must be declared before any reform ought to take place.

It is not therefore any class however numerous, any society however respectable, any subaltern assembly that have either right or competency to express that authoritative will. Nothing less than the people can speak for the people. This competency resides not in a few freeholders shivering in the corner of a county hall, but only in the whole community represented in each county, (as at present in Antrim,) by parochial delegation, and then from each county by baronial delegation, to provincial conventions, the union of which must form the awful will of the people of Ireland. Let us therefore conclude, by conjuring the county meetings now assembling to follow the example of Ulster, and by appointing delegates to a convention of their respective provinces, to unite their scattered and insulated wills into one momentous mass, which may have authority sufficient to make a declaration of rights in behalf of the nation. Then will the Sovereign graciously interpose on the petition of all the people; the reality as well as form of good Government will be established; the justice of the constitution vindicated; and when all this complicated system of national servitude and personal oppression, of perverted principle, and base practice, shall be done away, men shall exceedingly wonder how a nation that boasted of a free constitution, and the benignity of its laws, could have suffered itself to be loaded so long with a burthen so grievous and insupportable.

*March 3, 1793.*

THE SOCIETY OF  
UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN.

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

WE have often addressed you in your cause ; suffer us for once to address you in our own. Two of the officers of our Society have been thrown into a common prison, for the discharge of their duty :—a procedure so extraordinary, demands that we should lay before you the whole of that conduct which has brought upon the Society so strong an exertion of power.

The Society of United Irishmen was formed in November 1791. Their principles, their motives, and their objects, were set forth in their declaration and their test. At that period the spirit of this nation was at the lowest ebb ; the great religious sects were disunited, the Protestants were disheartened and sunk by the memorable defeat of their convention in 1783 ; the Catholics, without allies or supporters, accustomed to look to administration alone for relief, dared scarcely aspire to hope for the lowest degree of emancipation, and even that hope was repelled with contumely and disdain ;—administration was omnipotent, opposition was feeble, and the people were—nothing.

Such was the situation of Ireland, when in Belfast and in Dublin two societies were formed, for the purpose of effectuating an union of the religious sects, and a parliamentary reform. From the instant of their formation a new æra commenced ; the public has been roused from their stupor, the ancient energy of the land is again called forth, and the people seem determined, in the spirit of 82, to demand and to obtain their long-lost rights.

The first measure of the United Irishmen was, a declaration in favor of a full and complete emancipation of the Catholics. What was the consequence ? The moment that great



and oppressed body saw itself supported by a single ally, they spurned the vile subjection in which they had been so long held, and with the heavy yoke of the penal laws yet hanging on their necks, they summoned their representatives from the four provinces of the kingdom, and with the determined voice of millions, they called upon their sovereign for a total abolition of that abominable and bloody code, a code, the extent and severity of which was first made known by a report set forth by this society, and compiled by the knowledge and industry of that man, who is now the victim of his disinterested patriotism, and who in publishing to the world the abominations of intolerance, bigotry, and persecution, has committed a sin against corruption which can never be forgiven.

If the knowledge of that penal code has been useful, if the complete union of the religious sects has been beneficial, if the emancipation of Catholics be good for Ireland, then may this Society claim some merit, and some support, from their countrymen.

In 1791, there was not a body of men in Ireland that ventured to speak, or scarce to think, of reform. The utmost length that patriots of that day went, was to attack a few of the out-works of corruption—the Societies of United Irishmen stormed her in the citadel. They did not fritter down the public spirit, or distract the public attention, by a variety of petty measures; they were not afraid to clip the wings of speculation too close, or to cut up the trade of parliament by the roots: they demanded a parliamentary reform; and what has been the consequence? The cry has been re-echoed from county to county, and from province to province, till every honest man in the nation has become ardent in the pursuit; and even the tardy and lingering justice of parliament has been forced into a recognition of the principle. If, then, reform be good for Ireland, this Society, which first renewed

the pursuit of that great object, may claim some merit, and some support from their countrymen.

At the opening of this session every man thought that the unanimous wish of the nation on the two great questions must be gratified :—that the Catholics must be completely emancipated, and a radical reform in parliament effectuated ; but this delusion was soon removed. It was suddenly discovered, that it was necessary to have a *strong* government in Ireland ; a war was declared against France, ruinous to the rising prosperity of this country ; 20,000 regular troops, and 16,000 militia, were voted, and the famous Gun-powder Bill passed, by the unanimous consent of all parties in parliament ; the Society of United Irishmen, a vigilant centinel for the public good, warned their countrymen of the danger impending over their liberty and their commerce ; they knew in doing so they were exposing themselves to the fury of government, but they disregarded their own private safety when the good of their country was at stake. They could not hope to stop these measures, for they had no power, but what they could they did, they lodged their solemn protest against them, before the great tribunal of the nation.

In the progress of the present session, it was thought necessary by the House of Lords to establish a secret committee, to investigate the cause of the disturbances now existing in a few counties in this kingdom. The examination of several individuals having transpired, the Society of United Irishmen felt it their duty to step forward again, and to give such information to their countrymen as might be necessary for their guidance. They stated a few plain principles, which they did then and do now conceive to be sound constitutional law. But now the measure of their offences was full, and the heavy hand of power so long withheld, was to fall with treble weight upon their heads. Their chairman, the Hon. Simon Butler, and their secretary, Mr. Oliver Bond, were summoned

before the House of Lords ; they were called upon to avow or disavow the publication ; they avowed it at once with the spirit and magnanimity of men who deserved to be free ; for this they have been sentenced, with a severity unexampled in the parliamentary annals of this country, to be imprisoned in Newgate for six months, and to pay a fine of £500 each, and to remain in prison until the said fines be paid. By this sentence, two gentlemen, one of noble birth, of great talents, and elevated situation in an honorable profession ; the other, a merchant of the fairest character, the highest respectability, and in great and extensive business, are torn away from their families and connections, carried through the streets with a military guard, and plunged like felons into the common gaol, where they are at this instant confined among the vilest malefactors, the dross and refuse of the earth, and this sentence was pronounced by a body, who are at once judges and parties, who measure the offence, proportion the punishment, and from whose sentence there lies no appeal !

We do not mention here criminal prosecutions instituted against several of our members in the courts of law for publishing and distributing our address to the Volunteers of Ireland ; respect for the existing laws of our country, imposes upon us a silence which no provocation shall induce us to break, we know when juries intervene, that justice will be done.

Such is the history of the Society, and such are the enormities which have drawn upon them the persecution under which they now labor. Their prime offence is their devoted attachment to reform ; an attachment, which in the eyes of a bad administration includes all political sin ; their next offence, is an ardent wish for a complete and total, not a partial and illusory, emancipation of the Catholics. Their next offence is having published a strong censure on the impending ruinous war, on the militia and gun-powder acts ; and finally,



the crowning offence for which their officers now lie in gaol, by order of the House of Lords, is having instructed their countrymen in what they conceive to be the law of the land, for the guidance of those who might be summoned before the Secret Committee.

The Society now submits to their countrymen a few plain facts.—The war has been approved by Parliament; 36,000 men have been voted—to be employed in Ireland; the gunpowder bill is passed; the Volunteers of Dublin have been insulted; their artillery has been seized; soldiers hourly are seen with a Police Magistrate at their head parading the streets, entering and searching the houses of citizens for arms; and finally, the officers of the only society which had spirit to observe on those proceedings, are seized and thrown into prison. This is what has been done, we will add what has not been done; a complete emancipation of the Catholics has not been granted, and a Reform in Parliament has not been accomplished.

We have now submitted to our country the whole of our present situation; with that country it rests to decide upon our conduct; if they approve it, to testify their approbation; if they condemn it, to express that condemnation. The mode of doing the one or the other is obvious. In one province the people have already organized themselves, and declared their political creed. Let the other provinces follow their example. Let the national convention then assemble and pronounce the national will. That will must have its due weight.

We may be after all wrong; our ardency in pursuit of constitutional liberty may be such as our countrymen have not yet spirit to follow; in that case we must desist, but we shall desist, not from conviction, but from despair. If Irishmen do not wish to see Catholics completely free; if they desire the continuance of inveterate abuse and corruption; if they dread a reform in the representation of the people; if they wish to

behold an institution, once the pride and boast of Ireland, insulted, degraded, and plundered of their arms; if they are content to see men who have the spirit to step forward and assert the rights and privileges of their country, dragged away like felons, and thrown into the common gaol,—then is this Society wrong in its pursuits and in its practice. We have no right to agitate with notions of liberty, now perhaps obsolete, a land which is determined to remain sunk in the lethargy of corruption; it is our principle, that if a nation wills a bad government, it ought to have that government. We have no power, and we have no right, to force men to be free.

Whatever be the determination of our countrymen, we will do our duty; if our principles shall meet with the approbation and support of the nation nothing shall compel us to quit that line of conduct which our conscience and our honor point out, and which we have hitherto endeavoured to pursue.—In the worst event, whatever may be our fate, and the public determination, we shall steadily support the men who are now, in the honorable discharge of their duty, suffering in the cause of this Society, of Liberty, and of Ireland.

*June 7, 1793.*

#### UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN,

ON motion, the following resolution of the Catholic Committee was read:

“RESOLVED that it is with pleasure and gratitude, we have observed the House of Commons, in this session, unanimously taking into their consideration, that most important measure, the present representation of the people in Parliament; and we do most earnestly exhort the Catholics of Ireland, to co-operate with their Protestant brethren, in all legal and constitutional means to carry into effect, that great measure, recognized by the wisdom of parliament, and so essential to the freedom, happiness, and prosperity

of Ireland,—a Reform in the representation of the People in the Commons' House."

RESOLVED, that this Society do agree to the following Address to their Catholic Countrymen.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

WE hasten to recognize, under this new and endearing title, a people tried by experience, and schooled by adversity, who have signalized their loyalty amidst all the rigors of the law—who have proved their fidelity to a constitution which with respect to them violated all its own principles, and who have set an example of patient perdurance in religious faith, while for a century they experienced a persecution equally abhorrent from every maxim of good government, and every principle of genuine christianity. We congratulate our country on such a large addition to the public domain of mind, the cultivation and produce of which may, in some degree, compensate for past waste and negligence. We congratulate the empire that the loss of three millions across the Atlantic is supplied by the timely acquisition of the same number at home. We congratulate the constitution that new life is transfused into its veins at a period of decay and decrepitude; and we trust that the heroism which suffered with such constancy for the sake of religion, will now change into a heroism that shall act with equal steadiness and consistency for the freedom, the honor and the independence of this country.

By the wise benevolence of the sovereign, by the enlightened spirit of the times, by the union of religious persuasions for the good of civil society, by the spirit, prudence, and consistency of the Catholic Committee, who, during their whole existence, were true to the trust reposed in them, and whose last breath sanctified the expedience and necessity of a Parliamentary Reform; by these causes, along with other fortunate coincidences, you have been admitted into the outer court of the constitution. Look around you—but without superstitious



awe, or idolatrous prostration, for the edifice you enter is not a temple but a dwelling. Enter therefore with erect heads, and yet with grateful hearts, grateful to your king, grateful to your country, attached to the constitution by manly principle not by childish prejudice, faithful to your friends through every change either of their fortune or your own, and if not forgetful of the virulence of your enemies, having always the magnanimity to pity and to despise them.

Loving the constitution rationally, not adapted merely to its infirmities, loving it too well, to dote upon its abuses, you must shortly be sensible, that, without reform, the balance of the elective franchise will be more off the centre than before, the inequality of popular representation more glaring and monstrous, the disproportion more enormous between the number of electors in 32 counties, and that in the boroughs from which you are excluded. What was kept close and corrupt before, will be close and corrupt still; common right will still be private property: and the constitution will be imprisoned under the lock and key of corporations. The æra of your enfranchisement will therefore eventually work the weal or woe of Ireland. We do trust that you will not be incorporated merely with the body of the constitution without adding to its spirit. You are called into citizenship not to sanction abuse, but to discountenance it, not to accumulate corruption, but to meliorate manners and infuse into society purer practice and sounder morality; always separating in thought and action, *mis-government* and *mule-administration* from the good sense and right reason natural to, and coeval with the constitution; and always remembering that nothing can be good for any part of the nation which has not for its object the interest of the whole.

Fellow-citizens—We speak to you with much earnestness of affection, repeating with sincerest pleasure, that tender and domestic appellation which binds us into one people. But

what is it which has lately made and must keep us one? Not the soil we inhabit, not the language we use, but our singleness of sentiment respecting one great political truth, our indivisible union on the main object of general interest—a parliamentary reform. This is the civic faith for which this society exists, and for which it suffers under a persecution that still as of old, savage in its nature, though somewhat smothered in its form, wreaks its mighty vengeance on person and property, or exerts its puny malice to ruin us in the professions by which we live, merely for an undaunted adherence to a single good and glorious principle which has always animated our publications and will always regulate our practice. We conjure you, in the most solemn manner, to remember with the respect due to such authority, the last words, the political will and testament of a body of men who have deserved so well of their constituents and of their country. Never forget them. Never forsake them—Let this principle of Reform live in your practice, and give energy to the new character you are about to sustain for the glory or the disgrace of Ireland.

As for us, our particular sufferings as a Society are lost, at present, in an overwhelming sense of national calamity. We wish in our social, and individual capacities, to expedite every measure that has the remotest chance of giving the smallest relief to such urgent distress, lamenting at the same time that every means adopted must prove partial, palliative and inadequate, until the origin of the extended evil be boldly looked to, and what is universally understood, is as plainly and publicly expressed. What then is the cause? War. What is the cure? Peace. What will prevent a relapse and perpetuate that health and soundness which it had restored? a national House of Commons, that would conform to the will of the people by the imposition of such duties as might secure, to Irish manufactures, a natural but not exclusive preference in an Irish market: a national House of Commons acting from and

therefore for the People, not personating but representing them, not holding forth the constitution merely as an object to provoke doubts or excite terrors, speaking always in clouds, or by thunder; but writing the law in the tablet of our hearts, riveting the constitution into the common sense of the community, the basis from which it has shifted, and extinguished all discontent and disaffection by diffusing rational loyalty and the allegiance of convinced understanding.

We will never cease to dwell on this theme, for we wish to make the times conform to us, rather than to make our principles conform to the times. For the present, we lie just in the track of the pestilential wind of calumny, which purposely confounds the reformer, the republican, and the regicide; which preserves and propagates a panic of innovation and a distrust between man and man, in order to keep back internal union, at the dreadful sacrifice of commercial credit, of public revenue, and of national character. Even, at this moment, perhaps, a provident jealousy may be contriving means for our dispersion, naturally fearful that wherever two or three honest men are assembled together, their conversation must, at this time, turn on the oppressions of the subject, and the misery of this country.

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*Friday, November 22d, 1792.*

THE SOCIETY OF  
UNITED IRISHMEN IN DUBLIN,  
TO MR. THOMAS MUIR.

WE who so lately heard you, in the centre of our circle, pour out, with a fervor of rational declamation, the earnest prayer of an honest heart, for the freedom, peace, and happiness of the human race, have felt, as men ought to feel, (for you are now every man's countryman) on hearing an account, from eye-witnesses, of your present rigorous imprisonment preparatory to fourteen years, not of banishment, but of trans-



portation from your native land.—For what?—For conspiring against the corruptions of the constitution, and zealously striving to give a representation to two millions and a half of people. We address you in no strain of idiot ceremony, but as men sympathising with man suffering; the language alive and the heart affected.

Let the few lawyers who can look down on their profession from the height of their nature, expatiate with a noble indignation on the consequence of “politics entering into the courts of justice and seating herself on the bench,” sharpening the severity of sentence which the snappishness of office, and the acrimony of personal vengeance, seizing with greediness the advantage of unascertained and uncertain punishment, rioting upon *discretion*, and without weighing the intrinsic nature of the offence or the inadequacy of the penalty, really punishing public opinion, and accumulating all the exasperation felt against the prevailing sense of the community, on the head of an unhappy individual. Let those singular lawyers detail with energy the terrible defects of judicial procedure in Scotland, through all its stages from accusation to conviction. Let them instance those particular irregularities in form which have vitiated your trial, in the opinion of the best lawyers, as it has already been deemed vitiated by its vindictive spirit, in the minds of the best men. Let this be done—but this is too technical a task for our feelings, nor does it indeed correspond to the dignity, we will venture to call it, the proud importance of your present station. We speak to you as citizens to a friend and brother, citizens condensed together in affection, perhaps the more from the frozen indifference, which, for the present, we feel around us.

You ought then, dear associate! you ought to extract comfort from your present situation. Pleasure often sickens, but there is sublime and permanent delight in struggling with unmerited misfortune. The cabinet contains its sufferings,

its doubts, and its despondence; the cell has its enjoyments, its hopes, and the nightly visitation of self-approving conscience. Has it not already shown you, austere but truly, the distinction between what is lasting and what is perishable? Has it not winnowed the world for your use, and separated the chaff of mankind from the grain? Do you not now feel the value of that friendship which clings to the forsaken, the value of that simple and sincere prayer which the poor of Scotland are daily offering up for the advocate of the people, expelled from his profession, because his principles were not those of a Craft, and banished from his country for having thought as Blackstone, as Locke, and as Sidney? Is it not sweet to think that every hour you now live is productive, that your life is not wasted, but burns away an offering on the altar of humanity; that your example serves to inspirit others in the same situation; that your solid virtue may have been the means of averting from others, the sufferings you yourself experience; and, that many who now enjoy their fire-sides, their wives, and their children may be indebted to your prompt interposition, your steady zeal and your patient magnanimity? Is it not sweet to think that your confinement or exile may, in any way, tend to the liberty of others——

If that can be called liberty where the public soul is imprisoned, where suspicion clouds the open, candid front of man; where the amiable ingenuousness that keeps no guard, and in the simplicity of the heart forgets to place a seal on the lip, is, at every hour, and in every place, exposed to calumny that lies in silent watch, with all the venom of the snake, and without its rattle. If that can be called public liberty, where two men meet, and after eying each other askance, both ask "what news?" because neither dare answer the question; where the morality of a man may be spotless and yet his person be proscribed and his principles accounted pestilential.— If that can be called public liberty, where at the once social

table, we see feast without fellowship, company without cordiality, and the jingle of frigid glasses without a free interchange of sentiment, and a mixture of mind,—where, at the still dearer domestic board, the wife shudders, when her husband drops a word on the strange impressive scenes that are passing before men's eyes, and in a panic, sends off the attendants for fear they have glided into the family as spies, and removes her very children lest they should hear their honest parent give vent to the bitterness of his heart, and call down a curse on the men who have been curses to their country.

Alas for that country! alas for that constitution, set in such hideous forms before the eyes of those who wish to love it, and guard it and save it from a conflagration that threatens to involve every thing human and divine?—That our rulers would or could *think at large*!—That they would not fit their minds merely to the dimensions of their closets, and their plans to the expedients of an hour?—That they would go abroad and ascend to such a mental elevation, as not only to contemplate the murmuring multitude below, but with a prescience derived from recollection, to command a prospect into futurity, to trace the progress of mind through the lapse of ages, till lost in eternal truth, still flowing onward, still enlarging, rising over every obstacle, and sometimes smooth, deep, and silent, just before it breaks down into a cataract, followed by a tide wild, broken, and innavigable. Would to God, that, instead of punishing a worthy man for mixing with the commonalty, our rulers would not merely connive at, but encourage such an approximation and intimacy between higher and lower society as would cure the vices incident to each, bring the one down and the other up to their nature, humanizing the great, eunobling the vulgar, and tempering the ferocity of both, in short, as would by turning useless pyramids of power into humble and cheerful habitations, make man relish his situation and deprecate all change as the worst of misfortunes!



In whatever part of the world, Dear Sir, it may be your destiny to dwell, believe us, you will bear along with you our respect, our affection, our admiration. There is an electricity that at present pervades the universal mind, and were you placed at the extremity of the globe, the heart of every patriot will always feel the touch of your condition; we feel much at present on hearing of your illness; we hope there are many years before you; but if otherwise, be satisfied, for you have not lived in vain. If death be, as we believe it, but a pause in existence, your happiness is yet to come; and if death be, as we trust in God it is not, an eternal sleep, are not the dreams of such an honest man infinitely preferable to the perpetual incubus of a guilty conscience?

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#### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS,

WE now close our account of those political papers which issued from the Society of United Irishmen, and which had for their object the constitutional and peaceable vindication of the rights of Ireland.—A reform of the Irish Parliament was the ultimate wish and ambition of those celebrated persons who composed and issued the productions which we have endeavoured to save from oblivion: eloquent and convincing, they succeeded in winning all hearts and heads to the support of a cause grounded on truth, justice, and good policy. The Irish Parliament found itself insulated in the nation—the battle was to be fought by Corruption and its retainers against the People and their pure and unbought advocates. The English minister, Mr. Pitt, ever watchful of the progress of public feeling in Ireland, and alarmed at the union of sentiment which prevailed, had no alternative but an immediate concession to the claims of the Catholics, who had almost in

despair bound up their cause with the Society of United Irishmen. A Bill was therefore brought into the Irish Parliament by the administration of 1793, for the partial emancipation of the Catholics of Ireland—an emancipation only sufficient to divide the Catholic from the Protestant, and thus weaken both against the common enemy—it had the effect anticipated by Mr. Pitt—it created hopes in the Catholic bosom that the same minister would, in the course of a short time, complete the emancipation which he had begun.—The difficulties of the cabinet increased—the war with France was as unfortunate in its results as wasteful in its expenditure—the empire was, if possible, to be concentrated; and Ireland, one of its most important divisions, was to be treated with mildness and conciliation; the advocates of the people seized the opportunity, and pressed on the minister the necessity of national conciliation—Lord Fitzwilliam was to be the agent of peace, and his Lordship was appointed the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland—Mr. Grattan, the nation's favorite and most eloquent advocate was to be the minister—the old monopolists and task-masters of Ireland were to be thrown into the shade;—Parliament assembled—all the supplies asked by the minister were *granted*, and the cup of hope had almost reached the lips of the nation, when the same minister who had filled it to overflowing, dashed it to the ground with remorseless insensibility! Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled, and the old enemies of Ireland's peace and happiness were restored. The feelings of the nation, exasperated to madness by such treatment, were quickly susceptible of every impression, however hostile or desperate. It was at this period the Society of United Irishmen assumed a new character; they no longer made their appeals to Parliament for relief or protection or justice; they appealed to the nation, and at length were forced by the violence of their opponents into the arms of the common enemy.

With proceedings so contrary to the *original* views of those

United Irishmen, whose measures and whose sentiments we have felt it our duty to give in this work, *we have nothing to do*, we have confined ourselves to *that portion* of the labors of the Society of United Irishmen which was marked as much by its legal and constitutional character as its firm and sterling integrity. No doubt, great talents and great energies were developed from 1795 to 1798, when the liberty of Ireland closed her existence in the blood of its children. But we shall leave the task of giving to our country a faithful narration of the perilous events that occurred in this sad and gloomy interval to another time, and perhaps to other hands. For the present we shall content ourselves with having given to the people of the North, and to the people of Ireland at large, a compilation of those productions which will for ever establish their fame as a nation, distinguished by the highest genius as well as the most intrepid spirit, but which has at length become the victim of a generous credulity—the sport of a cunning and unprofitable policy, and the patient contributor to the aggrandizement of that power which plundered her of her honor, her independence, and her natural station in the world.

JOHN LAWLESS.

*Belfast, December 16th, 1818.*



















